



November 3, 2015

Dear Airline Station Manager:

RE: Compliance with animal importation regulations

In an ongoing effort to avoid undue burden and stress to airlines and pet owners, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reaching out directly to airlines to promote full compliance with CDC's animal importation regulations. In addition, we ask that you share this letter and our contact information with your airline's policy and procedures unit.

On July 10, 2014, CDC published "Issuance and Enforcement Guidance for Dog Confinement Agreements" in the *Federal Register*. This guidance became effective on August 11, 2014. The guidance was published because of the substantial increase in the number of inadequately vaccinated dogs entering the United States in violation of CDC's requirements (42 Code of Federal Regulations 71.51) for dog importation. Globally, canine rabies viruses are responsible for the vast majority of the estimated 55,000 human rabies deaths worldwide each year. Preventing the entry of dogs infected with canine rabies or other diseases that can infect people in the United States is a public health priority.

The purpose of this letter is to make you aware, as a possible transporter of imported dogs and cats, of CDC's requirements for importation. In brief, dogs and cats that are imported into the United States must show no signs of communicable disease and appear to be in good health upon arrival in the United States. Additionally, dogs must be accompanied by a valid rabies vaccination certificate. These requirements apply to all dogs, including service animals, such as guide dogs for the blind. A valid rabies vaccination certificate:

- (1) Identifies a dog on the basis of breed, sex, age, color, markings, and other identifying information.
- (2) Specifies a date of rabies vaccination when the dog was at least 3 months of age and at least 30 days before the date of arrival of the dog at a U.S. port of entry.
- (3) Specifies an expiration date that falls after the date of arrival of the dog at a U.S. port of entry. If no expiration date is specified, then the date of vaccination shall be no more than 12 months before the date of arrival at a U.S. port of entry.
- (4) Bears the signature of a licensed veterinarian.

Puppies must not be vaccinated against rabies before 3 months of age, so the youngest that a puppy can be imported into the United States in compliance with CDC's regulations is 4 months of age. Dogs that have spent the last 6 months (or since birth, if <6 months of age) in countries considered rabies-free (<http://www.cdc.gov/importation/rabies-free-countries.html>) are not subject to the rabies vaccination certificate requirement, although CDC strongly recommends that all dogs be immunized against rabies.

Under CDC federal regulations, carriers are required to maintain a record of sickness and/or death among dogs and cats occurring while en route to the United States and must submit the record to the CDC Quarantine Station with jurisdiction for the port of entry (<http://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/quarantinestationcontactlistfull.html>) upon arrival in the United States. Carriers must also separate any dogs or cats that become sick en route or are dead on arrival from other animals immediately upon discovering the sickness or death, and must hold these animals in confinement pending further instructions from CDC. Any animals that have been exposed to sick or dead animals must also be held in confinement pending CDC's assessment.

Although the rabies vaccination certificate requirement for dogs applies specifically to the importer and not to the carrier, carriers should be aware that any dog whose importer is not compliant with this requirement is subject to being denied entry to the United States and immediately re-exported.

To best protect the public, CDC recommends that carriers deny loading any animals destined for the United States, whether they are presented as passenger baggage or as cargo, that appear to be visibly ill. In order to avoid the need to require re-exportation of inadequately vaccinated dogs, CDC requests that carriers closely review the rabies vaccination certificates for any dogs presented for transport to ensure that the certificates meet the requirements listed above and appear to accurately represent the dogs for which the certificates are being presented. Dogs that do not have valid rabies vaccination certificates should not be allowed on board an aircraft. Please contact your local CDC quarantine station (<http://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/quarantinestationcontactlistfull.html>) if assistance is needed in reviewing a dog's certificate.

Ensuring compliance with CDC regulations before arrival in the United States helps to protect public health and reduce potential delays and costs to the importer and carrier. Information on CDC's animal importation requirements can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/importation/>. Additionally, importers, carriers, and other interested parties may contact CDC directly to obtain additional information via telephone at (800) CDC-INFO or via the Internet at <http://www.cdc.gov/info/>.

If you have any questions about this letter or CDC's importation regulations, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail at cdcanimalimports@cdc.gov or via postal mail at **CDC/DGMQ/QBHS, Mailstop E-28, 1600 Clifton Road, Atlanta, GA 30329-4027**.

Sincerely,



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