

TRAVELERS' TIPS

ON BRINGING FOOD, PLANT, AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS INTO THE UNITED STATES

A Special Message for Travelers

Taking a few minutes to familiarize yourself with restrictions on bringing back agricultural items can save you time and money. It is illegal to bring many types of meats, fruits, vegetables, plants, animals, and plant and animal products into the United States without approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

These restrictions are intended to protect the plant and animal life of this country. Agricultural items can harbor foreign insects and diseases that could cause severe damage to U.S. crops, forests, gardens, and livestock.

We ask your cooperation in bringing into the United States only those agricultural items that are approved for entry.

Agricultural Inspection

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspects foods, plants and animal products from foreign countries at U.S. ports of entry.

Travelers often think that quarantine restrictions are aimed only at commercial importers. This is not true. Restrictions apply to anyone who brings or mails agricultural items to this country. Personal luggage and "carry-on" baggage are major channels for the international spread of agricultural pests and diseases.

Inspectors of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) determine if agricultural items are free from pests and diseases or pose a pest risk to this country. Small quantities of admissible agricultural items are usually released without expense or undue delay to the traveler.

Materials requiring extensive inspection, testing, or treatment are often held until they can be certified free of pests. Some items may be refused entry.

If there is evidence or a high likelihood that agricultural items carry pests or diseases, the items are not permitted entry. APHIS inspectors take them for destruction without reimbursement.

Even One Can Hurt

Some travelers with one or two fruits or sausages in their luggage, or a pet bird in a cage, are amazed that "just one" can be a problem. In fact, even one can hurt.

One piece of fruit, one piece of sausage, or one pet bird could be the means of accidentally introducing destructive pests or diseases into this nation. In 1971, some imported, diseased parrots were responsible for an outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease in U.S. poultry. Eradication cost \$56 million and the destruction of 12 million birds, mostly laying hens.

Plant and animal pests and diseases cost Americans over \$12 billion annually. Many of our most destructive pests are foreigners that cause greater damage in the United States than in their native environment, where natural enemies may hold them in check.

Clearing U.S. Customs

Before your arrival into the United States, you must declare on a U.S. Customs declaration form, all food, plant, and animal products you acquired abroad. Undeclared items subject you to a fine. Declaration forms are given to travelers on airplanes, ships, and trains. When you pass through Customs inspection, the agent may call in an APHIS agricultural inspector to check if your agricultural items can be brought in safely.

Smuggling

Smuggling of food, plants and animal products into the United States is a Federal offense. Persons found guilty of such smuggling are subject to a fine and/or imprisonment.

If You Visit a Farm Overseas

The U.S. Customs declaration form also asks you to declare if you visited a farm or ranch in a foreign country. Unknowingly, you may have picked up a livestock disease on your shoes or clothes.

Highly contagious livestock diseases, such as African swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease, are prevalent in many foreign countries. These diseases do not affect humans but will debilitate or kill animals.

When you pass through inspection, an agricultural inspector will determine how to minimize any disease risk. These precautions help keep foreign livestock diseases from infecting animals here.

Obtaining Permits

A written permit is required before restricted items may be brought into the United States. Look in the separate sections below for instructions for importing animals and birds, plants, and plant materials. Only residents of the United States may apply for permits, but they may do so on behalf of foreign visitors.

Live Animals and Birds

USDA restricts the entry of all birds (including poultry and hatching eggs) and many other live animals. Some animals are prohibited; others require health certificates and permits, and must be quarantined. ***For details, write: Veterinary Services, USDA, APHIS, 817 Federal Building, Hyattsville, MD 20782.*** Also, the U.S. Public Health Service restricts imports of dogs, cats, monkeys, and birds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service restricts or prohibits many wild animals, their skins and trophies.

Travelers can bring in up to two psittacine (parrot-like) birds per family per year if special entry requirements are met. Under rules effective January 15, 1980, each bird must be accompanied by a health certificate signed by a national government veterinarian of the country of origin. Birds from countries other than Canada must be quarantined at least 30 days in USDA facilities located in New York, N.Y.; Miami, Fla.; Brownsville, Laredo, and El Paso, Tex.; Nogales, Ariz.; San Ysidro and Los Angeles, Calif.; and Honolulu, Hawaii.

Travelers must write ahead to reserve quarantine space and deposit a fee to be applied to quarantine costs. They must also make arrangements to ship the birds to their final destination after quarantine. Birds arriving without such arrangements will be handled on a space-available basis or may be refused entry.

No quarantine is required for one or two U.S. birds brought back into the country. A veterinary health certificate obtained before leaving the country must accompany them, however. They must also be identified by a leg band or tattoo, as shown on the certificate. If you have had the bird out of the United States for more than 60 days, you must sign a statement at the entry port that it has been in your possession at least 90 days, that it has been kept separate from other birds, and that it is healthy. The bird must also be isolated at least 30 days at its final destination.

Pet birds from Canada may be brought in on the owner's signed statement referred to above. An APHIS veterinarian at the port of entry must also examine birds.

For details, write for the free pamphlet, Special Rules for Bringing Pet Birds into the United States, from APHIS Information Division, USDA, Washington, DC 20250.

Meat, Hunting Trophies, and Other Animal Products

The USDA also restricts imports of meat, game animal carcasses and hunting trophies, hides, dairy products and other animal products. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also impose certain restrictions and prohibitions. Fresh meat is generally prohibited from many countries.

Commercially canned meat is permitted if the inspector can determine that it is hermetically sealed and cooked in the can to make it storable without refrigeration. Other canned, cured, and dried meat is severely restricted from most countries. For details, contact an APHIS field office.

Plant Materials

A USDA permit is required before certain plant materials can be brought into the United States. These include fruits, vegetables, and plants or plant parts intended for growing. To obtain a permit, write: Permit Unit, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, 638 Federal Building, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

Mailing Plants Home

All plant materials you carry with you from overseas are examined at Customs inspection upon your return to the United States. You may, however, mail restricted materials directly to one of the plant inspection stations listed below. Ask the Permit Unit (address above) for mailing labels when you apply for a permit.

In mailing:

- (1) Be sure to write your name and home address on a sheet of paper put inside the package. After clearance, your package will be forwarded to you without additional cost.
- (2) Mark the outside of the package to show its contents.
- (3) Send the package to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, APHIS, PPQ.

What You Can Bring Home

The entry status of agricultural products differs by type of item, intended use, origin, and destination. The lists on the following pages will give you some idea of the entry status of agricultural items commonly brought in by travelers. Many common foods, plants, animals, and plant and animal products available in foreign countries are admitted without restriction other than inspection. Some are prohibited, and a few items are admitted only conditionally under permit.

Any item, however, may be refused entry if the inspector has reason to believe it poses a pest or disease risk under current conditions. Restrictions apply to agricultural items, whether they are carried as baggage or are mailed to the United States from a foreign country.

What About Your Car?

Cars that were used abroad and still have foreign soil clinging to them must be cleaned at the owner's expense before release at the port of arrival. This restriction does not apply to passenger cars coming from Canada or Mexico.