

Introduction

In today's global marketplace, borders between countries can be virtually transparent. International trade takes place in larger numbers and with fewer restrictions than ever before. However, with increased trade comes increased potential for the introduction of foreign pests and diseases that threaten the safety of American agriculture. The results of such introductions can have a devastating effect on the U.S. food supply, damage our natural resources, and cost hundreds of millions of dollars in eradication and control measures that ultimately result in higher priced agricultural products for the consumer.



Figure 1—Chrysanthemum white rust is one of the many plant diseases and pests that could accompany shipments of plants and cut flowers into the United States.



Figure 2—Insect larvae could be transported inside plants and plant products where they mature and from which they escape into the surrounding environment.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is responsible for regulating the importation of agricultural commodities into the United States. Additionally, APHIS regulates the importation and interstate movement of plant pests. APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) unit issues permits to allow the safe movement of these products into and throughout the country.

The following are answers to commonly asked questions concerning permits as they apply to the import of plants and related items into the United States and any movement of plant pests. This leaflet will also provide you with contact and Web site information for additional assistance.

Q. What is a permit?

A. A permit is a written authorization, including by electronic methods, by the Secretary to move regulated articles, such as plants, plant products, plant pests, biological control organisms, noxious weeds, items that may harbor these organisms, or means of conveyance in accordance with the conditions prescribed.

Q. Who needs a PPQ permit?

A. Any person moving a regulated article into the United States or moving plant pests within the United States. Permits are also required for transit of regulated articles through the United States.

Q. What is a biological control organism?

A. Any natural enemy, predator, or parasite used to control other living organisms.



Figure 3—A virus of stone fruit, the plum pox virus can be carried in live nursery stock.



Figure 4—Giant hogweed, a Federal noxious weed, produces a watery sap that if exposed to human skin can cause painful blistering and scarring.

Q. What is a plant pest?

A. The term "plant pest" refers to any living stage of any of the following that can directly or indirectly injure, cause damage to, or cause disease in any plant or plant product:

- Protozoans
- Nonhuman animals
- Parasitic plants
- Bacteria
- Fungi
- Viruses or viroids
- Infectious agents or other pathogens
- Articles similar to or allied with any of the articles previously specified.

Q. Why would the USDA require me to have a PPQ permit?

A. USDA-APHIS requires permits under the authority of the Plant Protection Act of 2000. Import permits are required for regulated articles that pose a risk of introducing exotic plant pests and diseases into the United States. Interstate movement of plant pests, including arthropods, mollusks, plant pathogens, vectors, noxious weeds, nematodes, and items that may harbor these organisms, also requires a PPQ permit.

Authorization to move live plant pests may be obtained by permit. PPQ carefully weighs the risks against expected benefits in making decisions to issue permits to move live plants, plant pests, noxious weeds, and biological control organisms.



Figure 5—As caterpillars, nonnative butterflies can be very destructive to native plants by feeding on leaves that are necessary for plant health.

Import permits are also required for the movement of plants whose populations are threatened in the wild and are protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). To find out which species fall under the CITES ban, visit <http://www.cites.org> on the Web.



Figure 6—Originating from Asia, a bacterial disease known as citrus canker can destroy entire crops by severely blemishing fruit, defoliation, dieback, and premature fruit drop.



Figure 7—Nematodes are microscopic organisms that generally feed on the roots of various plants, causing a considerable reduction in crop yields.

Q. How do I apply for a PPQ permit?

A. You can apply for a permit by completing the appropriate application obtained by (1) writing to Permit Services at USDA–APHIS–PPQ, 4700 River Road, Unit 133, Riverdale, MD 20737; (2) calling (877) 770–5990; or (3) downloading the form from our Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits> on the Internet.

Q. Is there a fee for obtaining a PPQ permit from APHIS?

A. There are currently no charges for PPQ permits except for the General Permit to Engage in the Business of Importing, Exporting, or Re-Exporting Terrestrial Plants listed on the CITES. The fee for that permit is \$70.00.

Q. How do I obtain more information on this subject?

A. Additional information concerning PPQ permits may be obtained by contacting USDA–APHIS–PPQ at the address or phone number listed on the preceding panel.

For information concerning the import and export of animals and animal products, please contact APHIS–Veterinary Services’ National Center for Import and Export by phoning (301) 734–3277 or by sending an e-mail through the “Contact Us” link at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie> on the Web.



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Moving Plants, Plant Products, and Plant Pests Under Federal Permits

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Cover photos: A Federal permit is required for the movement of many items. Giant salvinia, butterflies, and imported produce—transported illegally—can threaten the safety of American agriculture.

Photo credits: On the front cover, the photo of giant salvinia comes from the APHIS photo collection. The image of fruit in baskets was taken by USDA photographer Bill Tarpinning. The butterfly shot was taken by APHIS photographer R. Anson Eaglin. The images in figures 1–3 come from the APHIS photo library. Figure 4 was shot by APHIS photographer Terry English, figure 5 by APHIS photographer R. Anson Eaglin, and figure 6 by APHIS photographer Daniel Robl. The nematode photo in figure 7 was taken by USDA photographer Nancy Burelle.

