

USDA Clarifies Policies and Procedures for Transit Permits

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) recently updated and clarified the agency's policy and procedures concerning transit permits for plant materials.

APHIS requires a transit permit for foreign plants and plant products moving through but not remaining in the United States. Written transit permits outline specific safeguarding or mitigation measures that are required while a regulated commodity moves through the United States.

With the recent policy update, APHIS officials clarified that only plant material requiring an APHIS import permit, treatment, phytosanitary certification or other proof of origination, will require a written transit permit. Regulated products that do not require a written transit permit from APHIS are subject to inspection and additional safeguarding requirements at the discretion of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) according to routine CBP in-bond procedures.

The updated policy also states that restricted or prohibited plant materials are eligible for written transit permits, provided that shipments can meet all safeguarding requirements specified on the authorizing permit. Transit corridors for overland movement may be required; shippers also can be required to follow specific packaging requirements concerning movements through certain high-risk areas or prohibitions on transloading activities.

CBP monitors the movement of transit shipments and enforces written permit conditions. CBP also verifies the exit of regulated agricultural cargo moving under transportation and exportations (T&E) or immediate export (IE) bonds.

APHIS' updated policy clarifies that admissible plant products—as well as certain restricted or prohibited plant products—transiting the United States may be authorized movement by CBP with proof of a transit permit application on file with APHIS. All safeguarding, transloading and other movement details must be evaluated by APHIS and CBP prior to verbal authorizations for overland movement. Securing written transit permits in advance of T&E or IE arrival is recommended.

CBP and APHIS may refuse in-bond movements if facilities, staffing or other needed resources are unavailable or are deemed insufficient to mitigate pest risks that might occur as a result of the transit.

A transit permit application can be obtained online at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/permits/transit.shtml. For more information, call the APHIS permit unit customer service line at (301) 734-0841.

Note to Stakeholders: Stakeholder announcements and other APHIS information are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS home page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> and click on the "Newsroom" button. For additional information on this topic, contact Melissa L. O'Dell at (301) 734-5222 or e-mail: melissa.l.o'dell@aphis.usda.gov.

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