



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737-1232 • Voice (301) 851-4100 • Web: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

Contact:

Dave Sacks (301) 851-4079
Lyndsay Cole (970) 494-7410

USDA to Consider Guidelines for the Control of Tuberculosis in Elephants

WASHINGTON, Dec. 28, 2012--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is taking public comments on the Agency's intention to use the 2010 "Guidelines for the Control of Tuberculosis in Elephants," issued by the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA), to assess whether or not USDA licensees are adhering to the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations and providing their elephants with adequate veterinary care with respect to tuberculosis (TB), TB testing and elephant movement.

"Ensuring that elephants covered under the Animal Welfare Act are receiving adequate veterinary care and protecting those individuals and members of the public who may come in contact with these animals is a top priority," said APHIS Acting Administrator Kevin Shea. "APHIS has long used USAHA guidelines on TB testing and elephant movement and we are seeking comment on how best to incorporate the 2010 guidance into our enforcement."

TB is a devastating, chronic bacterial disease that attacks the respiratory system – most commonly the lungs and lymph nodes – and it can spread to other areas of the body. TB is contagious for both animals and humans, and can infect cattle, bison, cervids, pigs and primates, among others. If not treated, TB can be fatal to elephants and humans.

In 1998, to address the emerging issue of TB in elephants and to provide licensees and registrants with concrete ways to meet the standards, APHIS adopted USAHA's "Guidelines for the Control of Tuberculosis in Elephants," which were developed by The National Tuberculosis Working Group for Zoo and Wildlife Species. Since 1998, these guidelines have been widely used by the veterinary community and have assisted in detecting current elephant TB cases, preventing TB's spread by infected elephants, and protecting elephants that aren't currently infected from contracting the disease.

The 2010 USAHA guidelines are a revision of the 2008 guidelines. In addition to continuing the requirement that elephants be tested annually for TB, the 2010 guidelines also recommend additional travel restrictions for some elephants based on blood testing.

USDA enforces the Animal Welfare Act. The Act seeks to ensure the humane care and treatment of: warm-blooded animals used in biomedical research; warm-blooded animals exhibited to the public; exotic animals bred for commercial sale; and dogs and cats bred commercially. The Act does not apply to agricultural animals used for food or fiber. USDA licensees and registrants must provide their animals with adequate housing, sanitation, nutrition, water and veterinary care, and they must protect the animals from extreme weather and temperatures. For more information on the inspection and enforcement processes, visit APHIS' animal care website at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/.

APHIS is seeking public review and comments on this matter and welcomes the input of all stakeholders. Consideration will be given to comments received within 60 days of publication in the *Federal Register* of APHIS' notice. Comments may be submitted either by visiting the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/01/04/2012-31644/guidelines-for-the-control-of-tuberculosis-in-elephants> or by postal mail/commercial delivery to: Docket No. APHIS-2011-0079, Regulatory Analysis and Development PPD APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD, 20737-1238.

Supporting documents and any comments received on this docket will also be available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/01/04/2012-31644/guidelines-for-the-control-of-tuberculosis-in-elephants> or may be viewed in our reading room, which is located in Room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202)-799-7039.

With Agriculture Secretary Vilsack's leadership, APHIS works tirelessly to create and sustain opportunities for America's farmers, ranchers and producers. Each day, APHIS promotes U.S. agricultural health, regulates genetically engineered organisms, administers the Animal Welfare Act, and carries out wildlife damage management activities, all to help safeguard the nation's agriculture, fishing and forestry industries. In the event that a pest or disease of concern is detected, APHIS implements emergency protocols and partners with affected states and other countries to quickly manage or eradicate the outbreak. To promote the health of U.S. agriculture in the international trade arena, APHIS develops and advances science-based standards with trading partners to ensure America's agricultural exports, valued at more than \$137 billion annually, are protected from unjustified restrictions.

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