



United States Department of Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Program Aid No. 1832

Importing a Pet Bird

Special Rules for Bringing Pet Birds of Non-U.S. Origin Into the United States

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Cover photo: If you buy a pet bird while traveling abroad, you must adhere to certain importation requirements. These rules were put in place to prevent the introduction of highly contagious communicable diseases into the United States. (APHIS file photo.)

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has special rules for bringing pet birds into the United States from foreign countries.

A pet bird is any bird except poultry that is kept for its owner's pleasure and is not for resale.

(Commercial shipments of birds are imported under different rules than personally owned pet birds.) Poultry, even if kept as a pet, is brought into the country and quarantined under separate requirements than other species of birds.

In addition to chickens and turkeys, USDA considers pheasants, partridge, ducks, geese, swans, quail, pigeons, and peafowl to be poultry under its importation rules.

Why Are Special Rules for Pet Birds Necessary?

Serious diseases of birds and poultry can be carried by pet birds entering this country. For example, parrots from South America are believed to have caused an outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease (END) in southern California in the early 1970s. Eradicating that disease outbreak cost \$56 million over a 3-year period. During that outbreak, more than 12 million birds were destroyed, the vast majority of which were commercial poultry.

In October 2002, the United States experienced the largest END outbreak in 30 years. It took 10 months to eradicate the disease at a cost of \$180 million. Four million birds were depopulated; most of them came from commercial operations, but many came from backyard flocks and bird enthusiasts.

Because the first END outbreak demonstrated that imported pet birds can carry communicable diseases of poultry, USDA developed importation rules for quarantining pet birds to help prevent the introduction of such highly contagious diseases into the United States.

Import Procedures



A VS veterinarian monitors the health of a traveler's pet bird during the quarantine period. (APHIS file photo.)

To import your pet bird from a foreign country into the United States, you must supply certain paperwork and quarantine your bird at a Federal facility. You must provide USDA-APHIS authorities with:

- a USDA Import permit;
- a current health certificate issued by a full-time, salaried veterinarian of the agency responsible for animal health of the national government in the exporting country of origin; and
- certification from the U.S. Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) (if necessary).

In addition, you must quarantine your pet bird for 30 days at a USDA Animal Import Center.

Note: For information on temporary bans on the importation of pet birds into the United States, please visit APHIS' Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie/pet-bird-non-us.html>.

How To Obtain a USDA Import Permit and Reserve Space at a Quarantine Center

All non-U.S.-origin pet birds imported into the United States (except from Canada) are required to be quarantined for 30 days in one of three special USDA animal import facilities at the owner's expense. You must make a reservation at the chosen facility in advance by contacting the USDA port veterinarian there. The three ports-of-entry accepting pet birds are listed in the next section. A cost estimate for the quarantine will be provided when you make your reservation. Pet birds arriving at these facilities without advance reservations will generally be refused and may also be confiscated. Note that regardless of where you enter the United States, your pet bird must be presented for entry at New York City, Miami, or Los Angeles.



Pet birds are kept in filtered isolation cages during the 30-day quarantine period to prevent the possible spread of disease within the import facility. (APHIS photo by animal health technician Carlos Pages.)

Once the reservation is made and payment is received in full for all quarantine services, the animal import quarantine facility will issue a USDA import permit. This permit must accompany the pet bird while in transit. Also, please note that young birds that need to be hand-fed cannot be accepted for quarantine because removing them daily from the special isolation cages used at USDA quarantine facilities could interfere with the biological security of the facility.

USDA Quarantine Centers and Ports-of-Entry

All non-U.S.-origin pet birds must enter the country and undergo quarantine at one of the following import quarantine facilities. These are the only ports-of-entry available for importing non-U.S.-origin pet birds.

New York, NY

USDA–APHIS–Veterinary Services
John F. Kennedy International Airport
230–59 Rockaway Blvd., Suite 101
Jamaica, NY 11413
Telephone (718) 553–1727
Telefax (718) 553–7543

Miami, FL

USDA–APHIS–Veterinary Services
6300 NW. 36th Street (Perimeter Road)
Miami, FL 33122
Telephone (305) 526–2926
Telefax (305) 526–2929

Los Angeles, CA

USDA–APHIS–Veterinary Services
Los Angeles International Airport
11850 S. La Cienega Blvd.
Hawthorne, CA 90250
Telephone (310) 725–1970
Telefax (310) 725–9119

Pay USDA the Total Quarantine Fee at the Time You Make Reservations

This fee covers the costs of quarantining, testing, and examining your pet bird. You must include a check or money order made payable to USDA for the quarantine fee when you return the completed reservation forms. For current costs, please visit http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/ufees/vs_import_export_fees.html#1302.

Obtain a Health Certificate From the Exporting Country

A veterinary health certificate is required for all pet birds imported into the United States. The certificate must be issued and signed by a full-time, salaried veterinarian of the agency responsible for animal health of the national government in the exporting country of origin. The certificate should state that the bird has been examined, shows no signs of communicable diseases of poultry, and is being exported in accordance with the laws of that country. The veterinary official must sign the certificate within 30 days of the time that the bird is shipped to the United States. If the health certificate is not in English, a complete written English translation must be provided.

Note: In addition to health certificates, all species of birds to be allowed into the United States at any of the three ports noted must arrive with the appropriate documents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the exporting country. (See the section on FWS regulations later in this leaflet.)

Transport Your Pet Bird and All Necessary Documentation to the Import Facility Where You Have Reserved Quarantine Space

If you are personally reentering the United States at a port other than New York City, Miami, or Los Angeles, your pet bird must still be shipped from abroad directly to one of those three cities for entry processing. You will need to hire a private company or U.S. customs broker to move your pet bird from its port-of-entry to the USDA import facility nearby.

Upon arriving at the facility, your pet bird will be transferred to a special isolation cage. Your transport cage may need to be removed from the premises because USDA animal import facilities may not have the space to store privately owned cages.

If you wish to reenter the United States at New York City, Miami, or Los Angeles, you can present your pet bird at the USDA quarantine facility without using a broker/transporter.

The Quarantine Period

Your pet bird will remain in quarantine for at least 30 days. USDA–APHIS veterinarians and other employees will care for your pet bird during this time. Pet birds are kept in air-filtered isolation cages to prevent the possible spread of disease within the import facility. Food and water are always readily available.

APHIS veterinarians will test your pet bird during the quarantine period to ensure that it is free of communicable diseases of poultry. Unfortunately, if your pet bird is found to be infected with such a disease (e.g., exotic Newcastle disease or avian influenza virus), it will not be allowed to enter the United States. If this should happen, you can choose to have your bird humanely euthanized or pay for its return to the country of origin if that country is willing to accept it.

Smuggled Birds Can Carry Exotic Diseases

Most outbreaks of END in caged and aviary birds appear to have been caused by birds entering the United States illegally. Birds illegally smuggled into the United States are not quarantined and tested by APHIS and therefore may carry the END virus—even if they do not look sick.



Birds illegally smuggled into the United States are not quarantined and tested by USDA and therefore may carry exotic Newcastle disease or avian influenza. (APHIS file photo.)

As a bird owner, you should know the signs of END. An infected bird may exhibit the following symptoms:

- Respiratory: sneezing, gasping for air, nasal discharge, coughing;
- Digestive: greenish, watery diarrhea;
- Nervous: depression, muscular tremors, drooping wings, twisting of the head and neck, circling, complete paralysis;
- Egg production: partial to complete drop in production and thin-shelled eggs; and/or
- Mortality: sudden death of individuals and increased death loss in a flock.

Because this disease is highly contagious, owners of pet birds should:

- Request certification from suppliers that birds are legally imported or of U.S. stock, are healthy prior to shipment, and will be transported in new or thoroughly disinfected containers.
- Maintain records of all sales and shipments.
- Isolate all newly purchased birds for at least 30 days.
- Implement stringent biosecurity practices to prevent the introduction of END to your pet.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Rules

FWS Permit Information

In the United States, FWS regulates the importation of birds protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992 (WBCA). These regulations are part of an international conservation effort to protect exotic wild birds subject to trade. Most exotic pet birds, including parrots, parakeets, macaws, lorries, and cockatoos, are covered by CITES and/or the WBCA. However, the budgerigar, cockatiel, and rose-ringed parakeet are exempt.

According to the WBCA, in order to import a pet bird of non-U.S. origin into the United States, you must have continuously resided

outside the United States for at least 1 year. In addition, the WBCA limits the number of pet birds that can be imported to two birds per person per year. Also, all applicable requirements must have been met prior to the birds' arrival into the United States. All required WBCA and CITES permits must accompany the bird while in transit.

Please visit the FWS Web site at <http://permits.fws.gov> to obtain more information on the permit application. If you have questions, you can contact the FWS toll-free at (800) 358-2104. Overseas calls should be placed to (703) 358-2104. Overseas calls are not toll-free, and no collect calls will be accepted.



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Special Exemptions From USDA Quarantine Requirements

Bird owners from the United States who take their pet birds with them while traveling abroad are generally exempted from the USDA quarantine and foreign certification requirements. This exception applies only to U.S.-origin pet birds and is permitted as long as the U.S. owner makes special arrangements in advance.

If you wish to take your pet bird abroad, you must obtain all necessary USDA and FWS documents before departing the United States. Such preparation is especially critical for birds covered by CITES. You must get a health certificate signed by a USDA-accredited veterinarian, and you and your veterinarian should make certain that your pet bird is identified with a tattoo, numbered legband, or microchip and that this identification is recorded on the certificate.

While abroad, you must keep your pet bird separate from other birds. You must also make arrangements to have your pet bird inspected upon its return by a USDA-APHIS veterinarian. This inspection will be subject to a user fee. You may bring your pet bird through any of the three ports-of-entry approved for birds **or** to any international airport that can be serviced by a USDA veterinary official. For more information, contact USDA-APHIS Veterinary Services at 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737. The telephone number is (301) 734-8364.

Pet Birds Coming to the United States From Canada

Pet birds coming to the United States from Canada are also exempt from quarantine requirements because that country's animal and bird health status and importation requirements are similar to those of the United States.

If you plan to bring a pet bird into the United States from Canada by car, you must arrange for a veterinary inspection at a USDA-designated land border station. There are 19 such stations located along the U.S.-Canadian border. No import permit or health certificate is required. You must arrange for your bird's veterinary inspection 3-5 days before you enter into the United States. There is an inspection fee.

If you are transporting your pet bird to the United States from Canada by air or by ship, you will need an import permit. There is a fee for this permit. The application (VS Form 17-129) may be downloaded from the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie>. You must notify the port veterinarian at least 72 hours prior to your arrival. A health certificate from a certified veterinarian of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is needed.

Contact Veterinary Services' National Center for Import/Export at 4700 River Road, Unit 39, Riverdale, MD 20737, for current information about ports-of-entry. You can also call (301) 734-8364 or fax your questions to (301) 734-6402.

Note: Birds from Canada or pet birds of U.S. origin that have traveled abroad with their owners are not exempt from FWS permit requirements under the Endangered Species Act and the WBCA.