

**Date:** June 14, 2021**RE: Temporary Suspension of Dogs Entering the United States from Countries Classified by CDC as High Risk for Dog Rabies**

Dear Airline Partners:

This letter is to notify you that CDC is temporarily suspending the importation of all dogs from countries classified by CDC as [high risk for dog rabies](#). This suspension has been announced on [CDC's website](#) and will be published in the *Federal Register Notice* on June 16th.

Between January and December 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, CDC documented more than 450 dogs arriving from countries classified as high-risk for dog rabies with incomplete, inadequate, or fraudulent rabies vaccination certificates, resulting in the denial of entry for the dogs and subsequent return to the dogs' country of origin. Because of limited flights to return improperly certified dogs, these denials sometimes led to dogs being housed in suboptimal circumstances. Resolving these incidents humanely, while still preventing the risk of rabies importation, required substantial efforts by airlines (in whose custody these dogs are left), Customs and Border Protection, CDC, local public health agencies, and other interested parties.

**Effective July 14, 2021, CDC is temporarily suspending the importation of dogs from countries classified by CDC as high risk for dog rabies.** This includes dogs arriving from countries NOT at high risk if the dogs have been in a high-risk country during the previous six months. This temporary suspension will not affect individuals importing dogs from countries with low-risk or no-known risk for dog rabies, or United States citizens and lawful residents returning with pets (provided all exemption requirements are met).

This temporary suspension is necessary to ensure the health and safety of dogs imported into the United States and to protect the public's health against the reintroduction of dog rabies virus variants. Dog rabies was declared eliminated from the United States in 2007. Rabies is one of the deadliest zoonotic diseases and accounts for an estimated 59,000 human deaths globally each year. Dog rabies is responsible for 99% of these deaths. During the temporary suspension, CDC will establish a process for dog importation from high-risk rabies countries that ensures all certifications are in place before dogs board international flights.

This suspension applies to all dogs, including puppies, emotional support dogs, and dogs that traveled out of the United States and are returning from a high-risk country. The suspension is temporary and will be reviewed periodically.

While the suspension is in place, CDC may grant advanced written approval (CDC Dog Import Permit) permitting the importation of fully rabies-immunized dogs, 6 months or older, from a high-risk country.

To be eligible to apply for a CDC Dog Import Permit, the importer must be:

- a US government employee with permanent change of station or temporary duty orders;
- a US citizen or lawful US resident relocating to the United States, such as for employment or education; or
- an owner of a service dog that is specifically trained to assist a person with a disability.

Each eligible importer may be permitted to bring in a maximum of 3 personal pet dogs one time during the temporary suspension. Institutions requesting to import more than 3 dogs may apply to do so for the

purposes of science, education, or exhibition as defined in 42 CFR 71.50, or for bona fide law enforcement activities. View the [application instructions](#) for more details.


**Dogs with CDC Import Permits must enter the United States at a port of entry with a US Customs and Border Protection (CBP)-issued live animal care facility with a Facilities Information and Resource Management System (FIRMS) code, which currently is only available at the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City.** Airlines that do not fly into airports with a live animal care facility with a CBP-issued FIRMS code are not eligible to transport dogs from high-risk countries during the suspension. Additional approved ports of entry will be added to the [application website](#) as they become available.

This suspension applies to all dogs whether they are hand-carried, checked in as passenger baggage, or transported as cargo on flights to the United States. **CDC requires carriers to deny boarding to any dog that does not have a CDC Dog Import Permit if the dog originated in a high-risk country for rabies or has visited a high-risk country in past 6 months.** Airline staff should verify the dog's country of origin and 6-month travel history prior to boarding. The carrier should request a copy of the CDC Dog Import Permit and the email granting approval to import a dog PRIOR to boarding the dog. If the importer does not present both documents at check-in, do not board the dog, and have the importer contact CDC.

Dogs arriving from high-risk countries without a CDC Dog Import Permit or arriving at an unapproved port of entry will be denied entry. ***There are no exceptions.*** If the dog is denied entry to the United States, the airline will be required to return the dog to the country of departure on the next available flight, regardless of carrier or route. Airline carriers may enter into contractual arrangements with an importer or a third party relating to the expenses of the animal's return; however, receipt of payment is not an acceptable reason to delay return of the dog. Appeals are not permitted. ***If the importer abandons the dog or attempts to interfere with the return process, CDC will consider the dog abandoned, and the airline carrier will become legally and financially responsible for the dog (as goods denied entry).***

If you have any questions about this letter or CDC's importation regulations, please contact us via email at [cdcanimalimports@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcanimalimports@cdc.gov)

Sincerely,



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