



Date: October 28, 2024

**Division of Global Migration Health (DGMH) Policy Statement: Requirement for CDC-registered animal care facilities (ACF) to facilitate the return of dogs and cats denied entry to the United States**

Subject: Requirement for CDC-registered animal care facilities (ACF) to facilitate the return of animals denied entry to the United States

CDC's animal import regulations are enacted under the authority of sections 361-369 of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 264-272. Pursuant to these authorities, CDC seeks to prevent the introduction, transmission, and spread into the United States of zoonotic diseases of public health concern, including dog-maintained rabies virus variants (sometimes referred to as dog rabies), and other zoonotic diseases adversely affecting human health.

**Authority:**

Dog and cats imported into the United States must meet the requirements for admission under 42 CFR 71.51. Animals denied admission to the United States that were transported to the United States via air must be returned by the airline to the country of departure at the importer's expense on the next available outbound flight (no later than 72 hours after arrival), regardless of airline or route, if fit to travel. 42 CFR 71.51(x)(2).

CDC may grant temporary extensions of returns to the country of departure for animals that are not fit for travel as determined by a CDC Veterinary Medical Officer, but the importer (or air carrier in the case of abandonment) must arrange for the return of the animal to its country of departure as soon as CDC notifies the air carrier that the animal is fit for travel. 42 CFR 71.51(x)(7). Pending the animal's return to the country of departure, the animal shall be detained at the importer's expense in the custody of the air carrier at a CDC-registered animal care facility (ACF) (or other boarding, kennel, or veterinary clinic as directed by CDC). 42 CFR 71.51(x)(2).

Importers must comply with CDC requirements for the return of an animal. Refusal to cooperate will result in the animal being considered abandoned by the importer, and custody of the animal will be transferred to the air carrier who will become the owner and assume responsibility for the disposition of the animal. 42 CFR 71.51(x)(10), (aa). CDC may deem an animal to be abandoned if the importer fails to cooperate with or respond to the air carrier's attempts to comply with the provisions of 42 CFR 71.51 within 24 hours; or if the importer refuses payment within 24 hours for CDC-mandated examinations, testing, holding, or treatment needed to ensure the safe importation of dogs and cats into the United States. 42 CFR 71.51(aa)(2)(ii)(iii).

**Policy Statement:**

It is the policy of CDC that ACFs shall cooperate with the importer, air carrier, and CDC in returning animals denied entry to the United States to their country of departure. ACFs are required to coordinate with the importer, air carrier, and CDC to facilitate the return of an animal within 72 hours following a denial of entry. Determinations regarding an animal's fitness for travel will be made by a CDC Veterinary Medical Officer. CDC may require an ACF to transfer an animal to a different ACF or to another CDC-approved boarding, kennel, or veterinary clinic as needed. ACFs are prohibited from delaying, impeding, interfering with, or obstructing the return of animals denied entry by CDC. Engaging in such actions may constitute grounds for revocation of an ACF's registration under 42 CFR 71.51(r) or lead to CDC requesting under 42 CFR 71.51(gg) that U.S. Customs and Border Protection and/or the U.S. Department of Justice issue additional fines or penalties as authorized by law.

This policy statement is effective October 28, 2024.

This policy statement will be emailed on or before the effective date to the point of contact for the ACF who is either the owner or manager of the ACF and will also be posted on the CDC website.

Any questions concerning this policy may be addressed by contacting [cdcanimalimports@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcanimalimports@cdc.gov).