



Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Elliptical Road, Diliman
1100 Quezon City

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR

No. 15

Series of 2021

SUBJECT: TRANSITORY GUIDELINES REGARDING THE IMPORTATION OF RABBITS INTO THE PHILIPPINES

The Department of Agriculture (DA) recognizes the increasing interest of many Filipino farmers in raising rabbits for meat production due to the ease in propagation and minimal production costs. The growing awareness and local acceptance of rabbit meat as an alternative source of protein amid the rising prices of major livestock commodities such as pork and poultry meat have ignited a subsequent increase in the SPS Import Clearance request for meat-type rabbit breeds.

Thus, in order to facilitate the safe importation and introduction of superior genetics from other countries while preventing the inadvertent introduction and spread of transboundary animal diseases of rabbits, the DA prescribes the following transitory guidelines for the necessary guidance of all concerned:

A. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPLICATION OF IMPORTATION OF RABBITS INTO THE PHILIPPINES

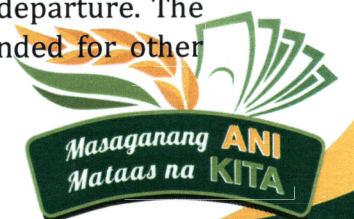
1. Any importer of rabbits must be authorized as a live rabbit importer by BAI National Veterinary Quarantine Services Division (NVQSD). The following are the requirements for application as live rabbit importer:
 - a. Letter of Intent addressed to BAI Director
 - b. Mayor's Business Permit (certified true copy)
 - c. DTI or SEC Registration (certified true copy)
 - d. BIR Tax Identification Number (certified true copy)
 - e. BOC AMO Accreditation (certified true copy)
 - f. Letter of authority for the company's representative
 - g. Notarized Lease of Contract or Proof of Ownership of Farm/Facility
 - h. Certificate of animal facility registration with BAI/DARFO
 - i. Memorandum of Understanding between the importer and owner of the BAI/DARFO registered facility (if applicable).

2. Rabbit farm, including the livestock transport vehicle, must be accredited under the BAI Animal Health and Welfare Division (AHWD) or DA Regional Field Office (RFO). Proposed quarantine site must likewise be inspected by the BAI Veterinary Quarantine Services (VQS) in the region.
3. Proposed quarantine site must have sufficient cages, housing ventilation and thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before the arrival of the imported rabbits. There shall also be no other animals other than the rabbits to be imported. *Annex A* shows the list of parameters to be inspected for a quarantine site.
4. The veterinary authorities of the exporting countries must have submitted an accomplished questionnaire as written in *Annex B*.
5. Only certified rabbit farms and authorized exporters endorsed by the source country shall be accepted.
6. Upon submission of the accomplished questionnaire to BAI, exporting countries of rabbits shall submit their proposed International Veterinary Certificate (IVC) for evaluation of BAI, following the import terms and conditions set by the BAI. After the agreement of both countries on the IVC, trade can now commence.

B. IMPORT TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR RABBITS

1. The source country is free from Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease/Viral Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD/VHD), Myxomatosis and Tularemia for the past twelve (12) months.
2. The rabbits must be born and bred in the exporting country.
3. Rabbits showed no clinical signs of RHD/VHD, Myxomatosis and Tularemia on the day of shipment and are fit to be exported.
4. Rabbits were kept in a facility where no case of RHD, Myxomatosis and Tularemia was reported for the past twelve months prior to shipment or since its birth.
5. Additional requirements for animals destined for breeding or pharmaceutical or surgical or agricultural or industrial use:
 - 5.1 were kept in an establishment where no clinical case of RHD/VHD was found upon inspection by an Official Veterinarian immediately prior to shipment;
 - 5.2 were kept in an establishment where no animal has been vaccinated against RHD/VHD;
 - 5.3 have not been vaccinated against RHD/VHD;
 - 5.4 were treated for internal and external parasites within 30 days of exportation.
6. The rabbits must be at least 60 days of age and not pregnant during the time of travel. Identification marks (microchip) must also be embedded to each rabbit.
7. The rabbits must have been kept at a government approved pre-export isolation facility or an in-farm isolation facility 30 days before departure. The rabbits must have not been in contact with other rabbits intended for other countries.

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C. OTHER ZOOSANITARY CONDITIONS

1. During transport, no rabbit from another country shall be permitted aboard the vessel or aircraft.
2. No feeds other than from the country of origin are taken aboard the ship or aircraft. The feed and fodder used during transport did not originate from areas or establishments that reported the disease listed in Section B.1.
3. Should any of the diseases mentioned break out on board the aircraft while the rabbits are in transit, the rabbits shall be disposed of by killing (euthanasia) and burning and burying their carcass in an isolated place to be designated by Veterinary Quarantine Officer (VQO) at the port of entry. No compensation shall be paid for any animal destroyed. Furthermore, all expenses related to the disposal of the rabbits shall be borne by the importer.

D. SPS IMPORT CLEARANCE APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. Any applicant who intends to import rabbits from foreign countries must apply for SPS Import Clearance through the DA Intercommerce Services (INS) website.
 - The applicant shall provide the following information during the application of SPS Import Clearance in INS (species, sex, age, breed and number of animals)
 - Country of Origin
 - Purpose of Importation
 - Proposed Quarantine Site
 - Expected Date of Arrival
 - Name and Contact Details of Importer

Other required documents:

- Travel Plan (The proposed travel date and route from country of origin must be indicated in the travel plan)
 - Pro-forma Invoice or Sales Agreement
 - BAI Certificate of Accreditation as Live Animal Importer
 - BAI/DARFO Farm Facility Accreditation
 - BAI/DARFO Livestock Transport Carrier
 - Certificate of Inspection for Approved Quarantine Site
 - Notarized Affidavit of Undertaking of Importers (*Annex C*)
 - Notice of Quarantine Release of Previous Importation (if there is any)
2. The BAI – NVQSD shall review and correlate the submitted documents to the checklist. The standard language for the purpose of this application shall be in English.
 3. The BAI – NVQSD shall review latest advisories of relevant international bodies (OIE, and other DA recognized bodies) and/or the exporting competent authority on the animal health status, presence of relevant

diseases, and other SPS-related risks as part of risk assessment to verify the health status of DA accredited/authorized countries. Applicable importation terms and conditions shall be derived from the result of the risk analysis and shall be subject for compliance of exporting country.

4. The request of quarantine site inspection must be coordinated by the applicant to the VQS prior to SPSIC application. A Certificate of Inspection for Approved Quarantine Site shall be issued to the applicant upon due inspection and evaluation of the premises and is submitted as part of SPSIC application requirements.
5. Each Certificate of Inspection for Approved Quarantine Site is **good for one batch of importation only** and should not be used for the succeeding shipments of rabbits.
6. The quarantine site must have undergone 30-day downtime to allow thorough cleaning and disinfection before the next batch of importation can be used by another importer.
7. In case of amendments in location of quarantine site, the applicant shall file a new request indicating the following:
 - Reason for change in quarantine site
 - Commodity
 - SPS Import Clearance Number
 - New Quarantine Site Address

Application may be filed with the nearest BAI RVQS of the new proposed location. The previous Certificate of Inspection of Quarantine Site must be submitted to the regional VQS, together with request letter for the change of quarantine site for a maximum of two (2) weeks prior to arrival. The BAI shall inspect the new proposed quarantine site provided the farm is accredited by BAI/DARFO. The regional VQS will then issue a new Certification of Change of Quarantine Site if the aforementioned requirements are complied. The new proposed quarantine site must also conform to the minimum requirements as mentioned in Section A.3

8. The SPSIC process which covers filing of application up to its approval may take up to 7 working days as per NVQSD Anti Red Tape Act Citizens Charter
9. The following items must also be noted in the approved SPS Import Clearance:
 - 9.1. The SPS Import Clearance shall be valid for sixty (60) days from its issuance and it indicates the period for which the actual consignment should have left the country of origin. An unused SPS Import Clearance shall be considered automatically expired/cancelled after the must ship out date and the importer must secure a new application of the SPS Import Clearance through the INS website. (Section III.F.5, DA Administrative Order (AO) 9 series of 2010)
 - 9.2. The approved SPS Import Clearance shall be good for one shipment and is not transferrable to other persons (Section III.H, DA AO 9 series of 2010)



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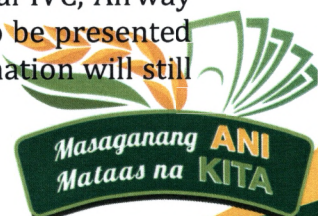
- 9.3. The name of the importer in the SPS Import Clearance must also be the name written in the IVC issued by the veterinary authorities of the exporting country.
- 9.4. Each importation must follow the ONE SPS Import Clearance, ONE IVC policy which implies that all approved SPS Import Clearance must have a corresponding IVC issued by the veterinary authorities of the exporting country.
- 9.5. The identification details of the rabbits, as written in the IVC, must correspond to all the animals which will arrive in the port of entry.

E. BORDER CLEARANCE AND PROCESSING OF IMPORTED RABBITS

1. Upon arrival at the port of entry, the VQO shall examine the accompanying documents of each batch of importation. This shall include the following:
 - SPS Import Clearance
 - Original International Veterinary Certificate (electronic export health certificate may be accepted provided an electronic system for verification was provided by the country of origin or its veterinary authority/Manila-based Embassy have endorsed the document)
 - Airway Bill
 - Identification details of the rabbits
2. If the person arranging the release of the rabbits in its port of entry is the authorized representative of the importer, said person must submit original Special Power of Attorney (*see Annex D*), with valid ID of the importer and the representative.
3. Customs Entry Document of the Bureau of Customs shall be validated after the conduct of inspection by the VQO/Animal Quarantine Inspectors and pertinent documents have been submitted.
4. The BAI VQO shall perform physical inspection to evaluate the over-all health condition of the rabbits. Thereafter, the following procedures and requirements shall be complied with accordingly.
 - 4.1. That a landing permit shall be issued in the port of entry by the VQO of BAI
 - 4.2. That a Notice of Quarantine for a minimum of 60 days from the date of their arrival shall also be issued by the VQO at the port of entry
 - 4.3. That the rabbits shall be unloaded to an accredited Livestock Transport Carrier and transported immediately to the declared quarantine site in the approved SPS Import Clearance
 - 4.4. That the VQOs shall underguard the transfer of rabbits from the port of entry to its declared quarantine site in the SPSIC. Proper coordination must be conducted by the importer to the VQS 7-14 days prior to the arrival of the animals. All the needed logistics, such as but not limited to transportation of VQOs, shall be borne by the importer.
 - 4.4.1 For rabbits which will need inter-island transshipment from the initial port of entry (e.g. Manila/Clark to Visayas/Mindanao), the movement may be allowed provided all necessary documentary requirements such as SPS Import Clearance, original IVC, Airway Bill, Notice of Quarantine, Landing Permit shall also be presented at the final port of entry. The VQO on its final destination will still

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underguard the transfer of animals to the declared quarantine site.

5. The rabbits shall not be removed from the declared quarantine site while undergoing the quarantine period;
6. The following fees shall be made payable to the BAI for the following:
 - 6.1. Issuance of Import permit
 - 6.2. Inspection and Issuance of Notice of Arrival at the port of entry

F. QUARANTINE PROCEDURES FOR IMPORTED RABBITS

1. During the quarantine period, the rabbits shall be subjected to periodic inspection of the regional VQO to evaluate the health status of the rabbits in the facility. Veterinary drugs, such as but not limited to anti-parasitic drugs, antimicrobial treatment and vitamin supplementation, can be administered when necessary. Switching and unauthorized removal of rabbits from the quarantine site is strictly prohibited.
2. On the second week of quarantine period, blood samples will be collected by the VQO from thirty (30) rabbits for serological testing for RHD/VHD. If blood sample/s will be tested positive, the rabbit will be immediately disposed under the supervision of the VQO. Another set of blood samples will be collected from remaining rabbits in the batch.
3. Should there be any mortalities in the imported rabbits during the quarantine period, the importer must immediately report to VQO and submit a documentation of its proper disposal within the farm.
4. Rabbits which are found to have signs of any infectious diseases shall be disposed immediately to avoid the further spread of the disease.
5. In case of disease outbreak, importer shall be liable for all susceptible animals affected outside the quarantine area.
6. Upon completion of the minimum of 60-day quarantine period, the animals shall be issued with a Certificate of Release of Quarantine by the regional VQO.
7. The regional VQO shall issue a Certificate of Quarantine Release within 24 hours after the end of quarantine period. Local movement of the animals shall not be allowed unless accompanied with local shipping permit. VHC will be issued by the VQO in the shipment of rabbits.

G. CONFISCATION AND DISPOSITION

1. All rabbits that are refused entry by BAI VQO and Inspectors for any non-compliance or violation of this Circular shall be confiscated and disposed of following the procedures prescribed under Section VII of DA-AO No. 09, series of 2010.
 - 1.1 Lack of valid SPS Import Clearance
 - 1.2 Lack of valid IVC from the country of origin

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- 1.3 Animal was delivered to unaccredited quarantine area
- 1.4 Animal exhibiting symptoms of infectious rabbit diseases upon arrival

H. PROHIBITIONS AND PENALTIES

1. Importers of rabbits found to have violated the abovementioned provisions of this Circular shall be penalized with administrative sanctions by BAI, as may be applicable:
 - 1.1 Bringing in rabbits without proper SPS Import Clearance and distribution of animals immediately from the port of entry.
 - 1.1.1 Confiscation and disposal of rabbits in favor of the BAI
 - 1.1.2 Suspension of accreditation for two (2) years.
 - 1.2 Switching/removal of animals from the quarantine site without the proper authority from the BAI
 - 1.2.1 Confiscation and disposal of rabbits in favor of the BAI
 - 1.2.2 Suspension of accreditation for one (1) year
 - 1.2.3 Accountable to any damages to local stocks should there be an outbreak of disease caused by the imported rabbits.
 - 1.3 Lack of Identification Details/Inconsistent Identification Details with International Veterinary Certificate
 - 1.3.1 Confiscation and disposal of rabbits in favor of the Bureau of Animal industry.
 - 1.4 Tampered information on the approved SPS Import Clearance/VHC/Certificate of Quarantine Site Inspection
 - 1.4.1 For major violations that are found to be deliberate acts of falsification with intent to defraud, BAI issues a FIRST AND FINAL REPRIMAND. The temporary suspension on the issuance of SPS Import Clearance and Importer Accreditation will be lifted upon submission of Notarized Affidavit of Undertaking. Repeated violation of such offense shall cause the blacklisting and cancellation of Importer Accreditation after due investigation and usual case resolution process.
 - 1.4.2 The following procedures will be followed to resolve this issue:
 - 1.4.2.1 BAI issues Show Cause Order requesting for the submission of a verified answer of the respondent/s within three (3) days from receipt of the Order;
 - 1.4.2.2 The SPS Import Clearance, including local shipping permit applications, Importer Accreditation, Transport carrier and Livestock Handlers License of the client shall be temporarily suspended while the case is under investigation;
 - 1.4.2.3 BAI reviews the statement and conducts further verification with the concerned parties.
 - 1.4.2.4 BAI may call for a face-to-face meeting with the respondent/s to discuss the case and come up with a resolution.

1.4.2.5 BAI issues a resolution within Ninety (90) days based on the results of the investigation and available documents. The signed resolution document will be sent to the respondent/s for their information and/or compliance.

2. Criminal sanctions for violations of this memorandum circular shall also be subject to the prohibited acts and penalties of fine and/or imprisonment prescribed under Articles 17 and 18 of Republic Act No. 7394, otherwise known as the Consumer Act of the Philippines; and Sections 1762 to 1765, Article II on Animal Quarantine in relation to Section 2747 of Act No. 2711, otherwise known as the Administrative Code of 1917 and Section 5 of Act No. 3639.
3. Shipments which are found to be in violation of Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act as amended, which states that *"It shall be the duty of any owner or operator of any land, air or water public utility transporting pets, wildlife, and all other animals to provide in all cases adequate, clean and sanitary facilities. They shall provide sufficient food and water for such animals while in transit for more than (12) hours or whatever necessary"*

Cruelty in Transportation shall include but is not limited to the following items shall also be subjected to criminal sanctions prescribed by the said act:

1. Unclean, unsanitary, unsafe facilities; small cages for the animals (large breed)
2. Failure to provide sufficient food and water;
3. Overcrowding, putting animals in the trunk, under the hood, top load or hanging the same in an unsafe, uncomfortable condition or situation;
4. Undue exposure of the animal to extreme transport stowage, painful and unnecessary restraint;
5. Lack of ventilation, exposure to extreme weather condition, inappropriate cage; and
6. Other analogous situation/condition(s)

I. NON-LIABILITY CLAUSE

1. All charges in connection with the violation of the provisions of this Circular shall be paid by the importer.
2. The BAI Director or his duly authorized representative shall not be held liable for damages to animals in the course of the implementation of the provisions of this Circular.

This Circular shall take effect for six (6) months after the date of issuance unless otherwise revoked earlier.

Done this 25th day of August, 2021.



WILLIAM D. DAR, Ph.D
Secretary