International Traveler: Musical Instruments

Last Modified:

The United States restricts or prohibits the entry of many agricultural products, which can carry foreign pests and diseases that harm American agriculture and our environment. Help us keep American agriculture healthy by following the guidance on this page about products you may want to bring into the United States.

Travelers entering the United States must declare all agricultural or wildlife products.

Travelers entering the United States must declare all agricultural or wildlife products to U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials. You must also tell them if you visited a farm or were in contact with animals before traveling to the United States.

U.S. agricultural inspectors will examine your items to be sure they meet entry requirements and do not harbor harmful foreign pests or diseases. U.S. inspectors have the authority to make a final determination about whether your products can enter the country. We recommend that you keep receipts and original packaging of agricultural products as proof of their country of origin.

As long as you declare all of the agricultural products you are bringing with you, you will not face any penalties—even if an inspector determines

that they cannot enter the country.

Musical Instruments that You CAN and CANNOT bring back to the United States

The United States regulates or prohibits the entry of musical instruments that contain materials derived from protected and endangered animal and plant species protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Brazilian rosewood, tortoiseshell, and elephant ivory are among the protected species most commonly found in musical instruments.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife (FWS) enforces these laws, and international travelers who plan to travel to or from the United States with musical instruments or other products containing materials derived from endangered species can learn more about entry and exit requirements by visiting the FWS Website.

If you have further questions or are unsure whether you need to obtain an FWS permit, please contact FWS' Division of Management Authority, Branch of Permits directly.

Lacey Act

The Lacey Act combats trafficking in "illegal" wildlife, fish, and plants and makes it unlawful to import certain plants and plant products without an import declaration. The USDA is currently not enforcing the Lacey Act Plant and Plant Products Declaration requirement for personal items such as musical instruments that are transported internationally in passenger baggage. Currently, only musical instruments being commercially imported (as a Formal Consumption Entry) require a Lacey Act Declaration.

Need Help?

If you can't find your commodity listed above, browse the Agricultural Import Requirements Database.

If you still have questions about a particular plant or plant products (fruits, vegetables, plant parts, seeds, soil, or souvenirs made from wood or plants), contact us.

Phone: 877-770-5990 (toll-free)

Email: plantproducts.permits@usda.gov

Print