Pet Food, Fish Bait, and Animal Feed

Last Modified:

USDA APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) and USDA APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) issue permits for the importation of regulated organisms used for pet food, animal feed and fish bait into the continental United States. Several species of invertebrate organisms fall into this category and are regulated by USDA because they are plant pests, vector livestock diseases or may transport pathogens and agricultural pests into the United States.

Several species of invertebrate organisms fall into this category and are regulated by USDA because they are plant pests, vector livestock diseases or may transport pathogens and agricultural pests into the United States. The import permits issued have specific rearing requirements and/or treatments that mitigate the agricultural pest risk associated with each specific organism. The following text describes the import requirements for several organisms and also presents a list of plant pests that may move interstate without a plant pest permit or veterinary services permit. Decision on whether to apply for an APHIS PPQ Form 526 Plant Pest Permit or VS 16-6 permit is dependent upon the livestock disease status of county of origin of the imported organism.

NOTE: The disease status can change at any time. If you are unsure of which form to submit, contact PPQ or VS:

- USDA APHIS PPQ Pest Permit Unit - Telephone: (301) 851-2357 or Email pest.permits@aphis.usda.gov
- USDA, APHIS, VS - Telephone (301) 851-3300 or Email apie@usda.gov
- Import Animal Products
- Veterinary Services Permitting Assistant

Import Permits

Earthworms: Earthworms are soil dwelling segmented round worms most often used as fish bait in the United States. Detailed guidance and policy for importing earthworms are provided at the link above.

Insects

Crickets: Crickets feed on a wide range of living and dead plant material and plant products. There are no permits required for the interstate movement of *Acheta domesticus*, an industry staple, within the continental United States. APHIS authorizes the importation from Canada, under permit. We also require a certificate signed by a Canadian Federal or Provincial official certifying that he/she has visited the facility and verified that it is producing this species. However, a virus, brought into the North America from Europe decimated *Acheta domesticus* production in both Canada and the United States. At first, some producers switched to *Gryllus assimilis* but production problems, State opposition and problems with customer acceptance led to a shift to *Gryllodes sigillatus*. We now only authorize the interstate movement of both species (no importation) within the continental United States under APHIS permit.

Silkworms: Silkworm larvae, *Bombyx mori*, may be imported under permit into the continental United States. Each shipment must be accompanied by an export certificate (zoosanitary certificate) from the government of the exporting country. The insect species must be confirmed by a qualified person prior to shipment. No soil or plant materials may be included in shipments. No permit is required for the interstate movement of silkworms within the continental United States.

Butterworms: Butterworms, *Chilecomadia moorei*, are the insect larvae of a plant feeding moth found in Chile. They are large, bright yellow larvae and feed on

Dasyphyllum diacanthoides, a large tree in the family Asteraceae. Conditions and treatments authorizing entry into the continental United States were negotiated with the Chilean government. All larvae are irradiated no more than 5 days prior to shipping at a government inspected facility and are accompanied by an original certificate of irradiation. The irradiation treatment prevents the larvae from molting to an adult. Permit conditions provide contact information for the USDA National Specialist in Lepidoptera who can confirm irradiation.

Mealworms: Mealworms, *Tenebrio molitor*, are insect larvae that feed on wheat meal and are believed to be ubiquitous. They are considered to be indirect plant pests because they can impact the quality of stored grain. The import requirements/treatments are similar to that of earthworms being designed to preclude contact with manure and soil. They can only be fed sterilized food 15 days prior to shipping and cannot be in contact with soil or manure during their entire rearing procedures.

Superworms: “Superworms,” *Zophobas morio*, are darkling beetles that feed on many plants, stored grains, and other plant material. Importation is not allowed because they are such general feeders on many types of living and dead plant material, species identification is an issue, contamination with other material is a concern and there is a large domestic industry producing them. Interstate movement of *Zophobas morio* grown within the continental United States does not require a permit.

Other Invertebrate Organisms

USDA APHIS VS regulates canned, freeze dried and field collected invertebrate organisms imported for pet food if these organisms are from countries that are deemed positive for diseases of veterinary concern. Please see contact information above regarding VS requirements.

Exemption from Interstate Movement Permits

No plant pest permits are required for the interstate movement of the following organisms within the continental United States: *Acheta domestica*, *Bombyx mori*, *Drosophila melanogaster*, *Galleria mellonella*, *Gromphadorhina portentosa*, *Hippodamia convergens*, *Odontotaenius disjunctus*, *Spirobolus* spp, *Tenebrio molitor*, *Tribolium confusum* and *Zophobas morio.*

For questions about permits for regulated organisms and soil:

Pest Permits Team

Email: pest.permits@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-2285

Alt-Phone: 866-524-5421

For general requests, such as permit applications and import requirements:

Animal Product Import and Export Team

Email: apie@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-3300

Note:

Email is preferred.

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