

VS Guidance 13405.3

Importation of Horses from Mexico Using APHIS-Approved Quarantine Facilities at Land Border Ports

1. Purpose and Background

This guidance document outlines standardized requirements for horses imported from Mexico into the United States through U.S.-Mexico land border ports. This document further clarifies conditions for entry into quarantine facilities approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS). VS staff and the quarantine facility's manager (QFM) will work together to implement the procedures defined in this guidance. A Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) from VS Port Services serves as a point of contact to answer questions about implementing the procedure. Contact information for each port is available at the [Equine Import/Export](#) website.

This guidance document represents the Agency's position on this topic and is intended solely as guidance. It does not have the force and effect of law, does not create, or confer any rights for or on any person, and does not bind the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the public. Language suggesting that this guidance is mandatory (e.g., "shall," "must," "required," or "requirement") should not be construed as binding unless the terms quote from a statutory or regulatory requirement. The information this document contains may be made available to the public. While this document provides guidance for users outside APHIS, APHIS employees may not deviate from the directions provided herein without appropriate justification and supervisory concurrence.

2. Document Status

- A. Review date: 6/24/2026.
- B. This document replaces VS Guidance 13401.2.

3. Reason for Reissuance

VS is reissuing this guidance to update formatting and align with current VS nomenclature and procedures. VS has also added details specific to facility requirements, inspection and approval processes for quarantine facilities located at the Southern Border Ports (SBP).

4. Authority and References

- A. Authorities (*Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR)):

[7 CFR 371.4](#)

[9 CFR 93.306](#)

[9 CFR 93.308](#)

[9 CFR 93.313](#)

[9 CFR 93.323](#)

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[9 CFR 93.324](#)

B. References:

[VS Guidance 13424, Procedures for the Import of Equines into the United States and Approved Quarantine Facilities](#)

[VS Guidance 13407.2, Testing of Equidae During Import Quarantine](#)

[VS Guidance 7000.1, Surveillance, Collection, and Submission of Suspected Exotic Ticks](#)

[VS Guidance 7003, Treatment of Animals with Coumaphous \(Co-Ral®\)](#)

[VS Guidance 13402, Approval of Permanent Privately Owned Horse Quarantine Facilities in the United States](#)

C. Definitions

- 1) Horse(s): Horses, donkeys, mules, asses, and other equids.
- 2) Compliance agreement: A written agreement outlining the duties and responsibilities of each party, executed by the QFM and APHIS.
- 3) Quarantine area: An area that holds livestock (horses, cattle, small ruminants) presented for import at the port of entry.
- 4) Quarantine facility: A facility made up of one or more quarantine areas.
- 5) Premises: One or more quarantine facilities at the same physical address.

5. Audience

VS employees, other Federal and State agencies, and members of the public.

6. Guidance

A. General

- 1) Only horses qualifying for a seven (7)-day (one hundred and sixty-eight (168) hour) quarantine may be imported through a designated U.S.-Mexico land border port under this guidance. Horses required to be quarantined for longer periods as a condition for importation must be imported through other APHIS-approved permanent quarantine facilities, which can be found on the APHIS website under [U.S. Ports of Entry for Horses](#).
- 2) Each horse intended for U.S. import must be accompanied by a government-endorsed health certificate and all required supporting documentation.

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- 3) Importers must submit a written service request to VS port personnel at the intended port of entry at least seventy-two (72) business hours before the horses arrive. Port business hours are 8 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday.
 - 4) Horses inspected at APHIS-approved equine quarantine facilities on the Mexican side of the border do not need an import permit.
 - 5) Importers must obtain a VS import permit in advance for each shipment of horses inspected at approved equine quarantine facilities on the U.S. side of the border to ensure VS personnel availability and quarantine space. Importers can apply for import permits through the [APHIS eFile website](#); please allow at least seven (7) business days for the processing of live animal import permits prior to shipment. Contact information for each VS port office is available through the APHIS website under [U.S. Ports of Entry for Horses](#).
- B. Approval of Permanent Privately Owned Equine Quarantine Facilities at the Southern Border Ports
- 1) VS must directly supervise any equine import quarantine facility approved under this guidance. VS personnel and QFMs will staff the facility to inspect horses and carry out quarantine activities.
 - 2) The facility must meet all requirements based on the type of facility approval before the first use and after each quarantine per consignment.
 - 3) VS must have a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), wherein the QFM agrees to comply with the directions set forth in this guidance and in the MOU on file for each APHIS-approved equine import quarantine facility.
 - 4) VS must inspect approved facilities annually.
 - 5) Facilities approved under this guidance can quarantine horses intended for import under one of the following two conditions:
 - a. "All-in/all-out" quarantine facility. This category applies to quarantine facilities that do not meet the standards for a "multiple lots" facility (see section 6.B.5)b. of this document). All horses entering the quarantine facility and presented for import are considered one lot. No other horses may be in the quarantine facility or commingle with that lot once the quarantine period starts. No horses may be released from quarantine until all horses in the lot satisfy release requirements or are refused entry. All facilities not approved as a multiple lots quarantine facility default to an all-in/all-out quarantine facility, if the facility meets general requirements.
 - b. "Multiple lots" quarantine facility. This category applies to quarantine facilities that meet the standards required to maintain separation of different lots of

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horses in the importation process. Individual lots enter the quarantine facility on one health certificate and remain isolated from other lots of horses at the facility. If the quarantine facility meets the additional biosecurity requirements set forth at section 6.C of this document and VS approves it to handle individual lots of horses, then each lot may either be released or refused entry as a lot. The facility operators must make transport records available to VS inspectors so the inspectors can differentiate between lots.

- 6) VS requirements pertaining to facility application, inspection and approval as a permanent privately owned quine quarantine facility are outlined in [VSG 13402](#). All requirements outlined in that document must be met, except where specific modifications or exceptions are provided and outlined below:

a. Location

1. The facility must be located within five (5) miles of the nearest approved port of entry for horses.
2. The facility must be located a minimum of thirty (30) feet from any other containment structure for horses.

b. Construction

1. The facility must be at least thirty (30) feet from other livestock (e.g., cattle, small ruminants) and resident or working horses on the premises. Resident or working horses must have a form of permanent identification (such as a microchip or tattoo) and are subject to official biannual testing with negative results for EIA, equine piroplasmiasis, dourine, and glanders.
2. There must be a minimum thirty (30)-foot vegetation-free zone outside the quarantine facility and perimeter fencing.
3. The facility must have acceptable vector proofing consisting of double-screened windows and other openings in the quarantine area, with screening of sufficient gauge and mesh (openings 1.2 mm or less; 18 by 18 mesh) to prevent the entry or exit of insects and other vectors that may transmit diseases of horses. Vector proofing must also provide ventilation sufficient to ensure the comfort and safety of all horses in the facility. The interior and exterior screens must be separated by at least three (3) inches.

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4. The facility must ensure all floors¹ and walls that have contact with horses and their excrement or discharges are impervious to moisture and able to withstand repeated cleaning and disinfecting without deteriorating. Surfaces must be free of sharp edges that could injure horses. Flooring must be skid resistant and provide adequate drainage.
 5. The facility must provide adequate cooling, heating, and ventilation that controls the ambient temperature, humidity, and odors.
 6. The facility must have electricity.
 7. The facility must provide APHIS/VS personnel adequate examination space, along with enough adequately trained facility personnel, with appropriate equipment or tools, to safely restrain horses while personnel collect test samples and physically inspect the horses (including inspecting them for ticks and spraying them with an acaricide).
 8. The facility must provide a lockable office/laboratory space with a centrifuge, refrigerator, and freezer, to be used for recordkeeping, document preparation, sample preparation, packaging, and potential storage.
 9. The facility must provide permanent restrooms in the office that all APHIS/VS personnel can access. Permanent restrooms must be available to APHIS/VS personnel in both the quarantine and non-quarantine areas of the facility.
 10. The facility must provide smoke detectors/fire alarms in both quarantine and non-quarantine areas, such as break rooms, offices, etc. The facility must also be equipped with fire extinguishers placed at multiple sites.
- c. Sanitation
- The facility must have vermin proof storage for any quarantine waste.
1. After quarantine is complete and horses are released, the material may be disposed of as domestic waste.
 2. Facilities on the U.S. side may dispose of organic material accompanying the horses as regulated waste before quarantine is complete. Waste from horses refused entry due to non-negative test results for EIA, equine

¹ Natural flooring (sand or dirt floors) must be cleaned daily, and dirty bedding must also be cleaned daily, and manure removed daily. Substrate must be replaced as needed; sand/dirt floors must be cleaned completely between lots with all new substrate provided.

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piroplasmiasis, dourine, or glanders must also be disposed of as regulated waste.

3. Facilities on the Mexican side may follow local regulations for disposing of waste before quarantine is complete.

d. Security

1. The fence must have bilingual signs (English and Spanish) posted along each edge of the perimeter indicating that a quarantine is in progress and no unauthorized visitors are allowed.
2. A security assessment performed by the appropriate U.S. Federal authority (APHIS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Division, or Department of State) must be performed. The facility will ensure a safe environment for APHIS/VS personnel to perform their duties. The facility management will complete any recommendations by the security advisors. This is necessary for APHIS/VS personnel to work at the location.

e. Operating procedures

1. Facilities must have written and effective VS-approved standard operating procedures for the importation and testing of horses from Mexico.
2. Personnel

All approved personnel, except accredited/authorized veterinarians providing emergency care, must sign an affidavit before entering the quarantine area, stating they will not have contact with any equines outside of the quarantine facility during the quarantine period, until the equines under quarantine are released for entry into the United States. Personnel entering quarantine who cannot sign such an affidavit (or have outside contact with any other species in quarantine), must shower² into and out of the quarantine facility. These employees must also sign an agreement stating that they will immediately inform their supervisor if any of the animals with which they have contact are, or appear to be, affected by a potential contagious condition. Permanent employees must sign a

² If the facility does not have shower facilities available, the employee must shower and don clean clothing prior to arriving at the quarantine facility, having no contact with other horses beforehand. The employee must change into clean clothes and footwear on arriving at the facility; these articles must remain onsite and be laundered and disinfected onsite. Prior to leaving the quarantine facility, the employee must change out of the facility clothing and thoroughly wash their hands. The employee should shower before having contact with any horses outside of the quarantine facility.

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new affidavit annually. The affidavits must be kept at the facility for VS' review.

3. Sanitary practices

The facility must provide clean footbaths with disinfectant at all entries/exits to quarantine, and the respective lot containment areas. Access to a faucet and running water at the quarantine area must be provided so that boots can be scrubbed and cleaned with proper disinfectants.

4. Handling of horses in quarantine

- i. The facility owner or operator must have written, VS-approved contingency plans for managing sick horses identified during quarantine.
 - a) For facilities on the U.S. side of the border:
 - i) The plans must include the names of USDA accredited veterinarian(s) who may treat sick horses at the quarantine facility.
 - ii) The plans must identify VS-approved treatment facilities with adequate isolation capacity within a reasonable driving distance from the facility.
 - iii) The plans must stipulate acceptable procedures to humanely euthanize individual horses or an entire consignment due to a disease outbreak and disposal of carcasses.
 - b) For facilities on the Mexican side of the border:
 - i) The plans must include the names of authorized veterinarians (Médicos Veterinarios Responsable Autorizados (MVRAs)) who may treat sick horses at the quarantine facility. Any horse(s) removed from the quarantine facility for further treatment are no longer eligible for import at that point and would need to restart the import process after treatment is completed.
 - ii) The plans must include contact information and notification procedures for Mexico's reportable diseases and carcass disposal in the event of unexpected death.

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- C. Additional Biosecurity Requirements for Approval of Multiple Lot Equine Quarantine Facilities
- 1) The facility must meet all general requirements listed in [VSG 13402](#) and/or the modified requirements outlined in section 6.B of this guidance as applicable.
 - 2) The facility must be completely enclosed and all quarantine area openings to the outside double screened to prevent the introduction of insects. The facility must be properly secured to prevent unauthorized removal of horses (refer to vector proofing requirements in section 6.B(6)(b)(iii) of this document).
 - 3) All quarantine area walls, floors, and ceilings must be constructed of impervious material that can withstand continuous cleaning and disinfection.
 - 4) The facility must be constructed to prevent horses from having physical contact with animals outside the facility and other lots of horses within the facility.
 - 5) Loading docks must be cleaned and disinfected after each use in accordance with the terms of the MOU. VS representatives may conduct spot audits of all loading dock cleaning and disinfection.
 - 6) There must be adequate ventilation in each quarantine area and in the quarantine facility to prevent the accumulation of noxious gases and odors, and to provide for adequate heating and cooling. The facility design must minimize cross-contamination of air between separate lots (e.g., physical barriers to shared airflow, controlling mechanical air flow, separate ventilation systems etc.).
 - 7) Protective clothing must be changed between different lots of horses.
 - 8) There must be no flow of drainage between separate lots within the facility.
- D. Import Procedures
- 1) For horses inspected at facilities on the U.S. side of the border:
 - a. The exporter/broker contacts the QFM to ensure space availability at the facility.
 - b. The exporter applies for an import permit (see section 6.A.5) of this document). The exporter is responsible for reviewing the import permit and notifying the VS Port Office if an amendment is required before the horses arrive at the port of entry.
 - c. The exporter/broker submits a written service request to VS port personnel at the port of entry at least seventy-two (72) business hours before the import consignment arrives. (See section 6.A.3) of this document.)

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- d. The exporter provides VS port personnel with a copy of the government-endorsed health certificate and supporting documentation at least forty-eight (48) business hours before inspection.
 - e. Before export, the Mexican National Service of Animal and Plant Health, Food Safety and Agriculture Quality or Servicio Nacional de Sanidad Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria (SENASICA) seals conveyances with horses imported under this guidance and records the seal number on the health certificate.
 - f. On arrival, VS verifies the seals and all import documentation, and offloads and inspects the horses.
 - 2) For horses inspected at facilities on the Mexican side of the border:
 - a. The exporter/broker contacts the QFM to ensure space availability at the facility.
 - b. The exporter/broker submits a written service request to VS port personnel at least seventy-two (72) business hours prior to shipment to request import inspection. (See section 6.A.3) of this document.)
 - c. The exporter provides VS port personnel with the government-endorsed health certificates and supporting documentation at least forty-eight (48) business hours before inspection.
 - 3) VS personnel inspect and collect a blood sample from each horse for all required import testing per [VSG 13407](#). All samples will be submitted to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa. VS will follow the protocol for non-negative results described in [VSG 13407](#).
 - 4) Any horse that shows signs of illness, including fever, during the quarantine period is additionally required to undergo testing for Venezuelan equine encephalitis by the NVSL. APHIS will hold the horse and its cohorts until the animals are eligible for release, based on test results. Testing expenses will be paid for by importer/owner of record.
 - 5) Each horse will be inspected and scratched for ticks on arrival at the quarantine facility.
 - a. Horses found with ticks must either be:
 1. Refused entry as a lot, and if at a facility on the U.S. side of the border must be returned to Mexico. Port personnel will spray the trailer and quarantine areas with an approved acaricide before returning the horses to Mexico.

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2. Held for an additional fourteen (14) days in quarantine as a lot and all horses retested for equine piroplasmiasis. If the retest is non-negative for equine piroplasmiasis, the entire lot will be refused entry, and if at a facility on the U.S. side of the border must be returned to Mexico; or be disposed of in accordance with [VSG 13407](#).

If the exporter wishes to keep horses in quarantine for the fourteen (14) days, VS will not allow any additional shipments to enter the facility. See section 6.B.5) a. of this document.

- b. After inspection and scratching, all horses will be sprayed with an acaricide. Horses must be thoroughly sprayed (drench the coat of the animal) with a 0.25-0.30 percent solution of Coumaphos (Co-Ral) solution on the day of release. Co-Ral is an effective VS-approved acaricide. Facility staff must also, under VS supervision, inspect and treat the false nostril and external ear canal for ectoparasites.
- 6) VS staff, or quarantine facility personnel they oversee, must check rectal temperatures for each horse daily while under quarantine. All temperatures must be recorded on an individual record card (See Attachment 1 for an example of a stall record card). Failure to record daily temperatures for all horses during quarantine may result in delayed release or rejection.
- 7) Horses must have three (3) normal temperature readings during the twenty-four (24) hours prior to release at least six (6) hours apart. Normal temperature is considered between 99.5 and 101.5°F.
- 8) If the importer of record identifies a sick horse, VS must be notified immediately. The procedures for examination, treatment, testing and referral of sick horses as outlined in [VSG 13424](#) should be followed. If a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) is administered during quarantine, a twenty-four (24)-hour washout period must occur before recording the three (3) normal rectal temperatures required prior to quarantine release. VS must be consulted prior to administering any treatment, including NSAIDs.
- 9) Horses must remain in quarantine and be observed for clinical evidence of disease for a minimum of seven (7) days (one hundred and sixty-eight (168) hours). The quarantine period officially begins when the last horse in the shipment is inspected and has had blood drawn for import testing.
- 10) Only horses with negative laboratory results that have been inspected and found free of ticks and have shown no clinical evidence of a communicable disease may be released from quarantine after seven (7) days (one hundred and sixty-eight (168) hours).

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E. Cleaning and Disinfection

All areas used during quarantine must be cleaned and disinfected prior to beginning a new quarantine period.

- 1) For facilities on the U.S. side of the border:
 - a. The importer cleans, and VS approves the cleaning.
 - b. VS personnel disinfect using an approved disinfectant per [9 CFR 71.10](#) and the APHIS-approved disinfectant site: [USDA APHIS | Disinfectants](#).
- 2) For facilities on the Mexican side of the border, facility personnel clean and disinfect subject to VS approval.

7. Inquiries

Please send all inquiries to: SDA/APHIS/VS Southern Border Port Office email vs.sbp@usda.gov.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Marketing and Regulatory Programs
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Veterinary Services

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Attachment 1: Example of a Stall Record Card

Horse ID#	Horse Name
Barn#	Broker/Agent
Date of Arrival	
Condition on Arrival	
Special Instructions	
Negative for Ectoparasites	Sprayed with Coumaphos (Co-Ral)

Date	Temp	Water-					Grain		Hay		Manure		Comments	Initials
		0	1	2	3	4					none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all		
	A.M.	5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea	
		0	1	2	3	4					none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all		
	P.M.	5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea	
		0	1	2	3	4					none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all		
	A.M.	5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea	
		0	1	2	3	4					none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all		
	P.M.	5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea	
		0	1	2	3	4					none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all		
	A.M.	5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea	
		0	1	2	3	4					none	normal		
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all		
	P.M.	5	6	7	8	9	0	1/2	all	0	1/2	all	diarrhea	