

# Animal embryo import comments sought

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The public has until Dec. 21 to comment on a U.S. Department of Agriculture proposal to establish import regulations for livestock embryos brought into the United States.

According to Bert W. Hawkins, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, embryo transplantation is

growing in popularity in the livestock industry. It is currently being used on a commercial basis in cattle, horses, swine, sheep, goats and rabbits.

"Technology exists to allow the collection and preservation of embryos for movement to any country in the world. These embryos can then be reimplanted in the wombs of recipient dams,

where they are carried till birth. This leaves donor animals free to be reseeded so they can produce more embryos — thus allowing female animals of superior breeding to produce many more offspring than under normal circumstances.

"Until now," Hawkins said, "our import regulations dealt only with live animals, animal products or

semen. Since there were no provisions for embryos, they could not be imported. The new regulations establish specific requirements for importing embryos.

"We want to provide a way for embryos to be imported," Hawkins said. "But at the same time we must establish necessary safeguards against accidental importation of foreign diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease or rinderpest, which do not exist in this country."

The proposal would require importers to obtain a permit from APHIS prior to importation. Embryos would have to be accompanied by a health certificate indicating that both the sire and

the donor dam met all U.S. import requirements.

Other requirements include:  
 —The embryo must be conceived as a result of semen, collected at an approved artificial insemination center, being inseminated in a donor dam at an approved embryo transfer center.

—The embryo must be exported from the country in which it was conceived.

—The embryo must be collected and maintained under conditions preventing contamination with animal disease organisms.

Written comments may be sent until Dec. 21 to Thomas O. Gessel, Director, Regulatory Coordination Staff, APHIS, USDA, Room 728 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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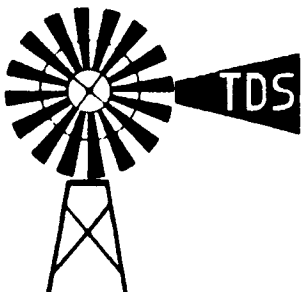


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