

New Zealand Lamb Imports Temporarily Stalled

DENVER, Co. — New procedures governing the importation of livestock into the United States have been issued by USDA, temporarily stalling the further importation of New Zealand live lambs into the U.S.

Sheep producers are being strongly urged by the National Wool Growers Association to make formal written comments on the proposal. All written comments are due by April 1.

The new regulations update existing rules, some up to 50 years old. USDA-Animal Plant Health Inspection Service proposed the changes following growing interest from New Zealand in importing large numbers of sheep into the U.S. Anticipated imports of sheep would overload federal livestock quarantine facilities under current regulations.

Although USDA considers the rule changes minor, changes could

have a major impact on the domestic livestock industry.

Regulations call for the addition of requirements for approval of privately operated quarantine facilities for imported sheep. Currently, only federal facilities can be used for quarantine. Facilities would have to be properly located and equipped to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.

Health certification provisions help ensure that sheep entering the U.S. are disease free, to prevent the spread of new strains of disease in domestic flocks. NWGA has raised questions of the feasibility of testing for some strains of disease and the possibility of transmission of diseases to the domestic flock.

In addition, the regulations specify that sheep entering privately-operated quarantine facilities in the U.S. be accepted only at ports where appropriate federal person-

nel are available to screen the animals.

NWGA is urging USDA to hold congressional hearings on the proposed regulations to allow adequate producer and industry input into the important rules. USDA has stated further permits on the importation of live lambs will be postponed until the new regulations are adopted. A shipment of 10,000 New Zealand wethers is pending release from quarantine in Portland. They were the first shipment of feeder lambs to be imported into the U.S.

All written comments must be submitted with an original and two copies to Steven B. Farbman,

Assistant Director, Regulatory Coordination, APHIS, USDA, Room 728, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782. State that comments refer to Docket Number 88-009.

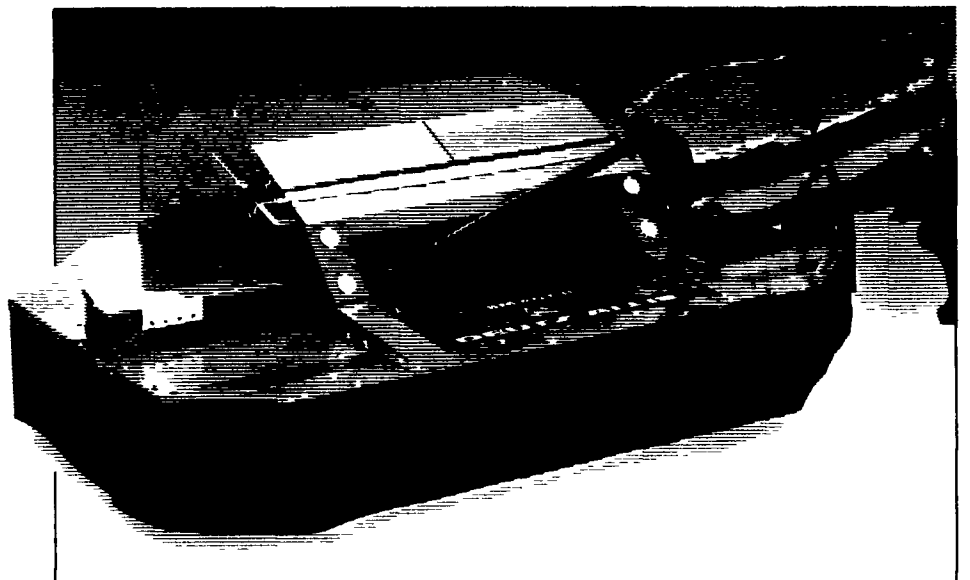
Two public hearings on the regulations will be held March 15 at City Hall, City Council Chambers,

1220 Southwest Fifth, Portland, OR, 97204; and March 17 at the USDA, South Building, Room 1605, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250. Hearings are from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily. Two copies of statements must be provided.



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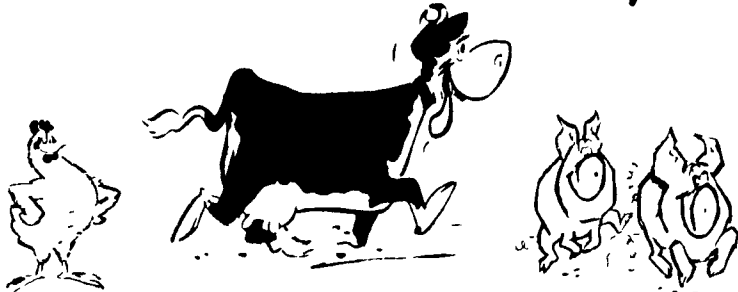
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