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30 June, 1999

ANIMAL QUARANTINE POLICY MEMORANDUM 1999/043

Chief Veterinary Officers, all States and the NT
Australian Animal Health Council
Animal Programs Section, AQIS Operations
Australian Veterinary Association
Office of the Australian CVO
Australian Livestock Exporters' Council
Emergency Disease Strategies Section, LPD
National Meat Association of Australia
Animal and Plant Health Branch, BRS
Chief Veterinary Officer, MAF RA, NZ
Veterinary Counsellors, Washington, Brussels &
Seoul

Environment Australia
Agricultural Counsellor, Tokyo
Dr David Pass, Australian and New Zealand Society
Laboratory Science Inc.
National Farmers' Federation
Quarantine and Animal Health Task Force, NFF
Genetic Manipulation Advisory Council
EU Delegation, Canberra
Commonwealth Department of Health and Family
Services
CSIRO Division of Animal Health

IMPORTATION OF LABORATORY RATS AND MICE REVISED IMPORT CONDITIONS

Animal Quarantine Policy Memorandum 1998/93 of 4 December 1998 provided finalised quarantine requirements for the importation of laboratory rats and mice. Those conditions specified New Zealand, the USA, Canada, Member States of the European Union and Japan as eligible source countries. The conditions also specified that AQIS would "consider applications to import from other countries, subject to an evaluation and acceptance of the Veterinary Administration's ability to provide health certification for laboratory rats and mice according to the principles of the OIE International Animal Health Code".

Since that time, requests for access to laboratory animals from Switzerland and from Israel have been made. Accordingly, the Australian Veterinary Counsellor in Brussels has undertaken an evaluation of both these countries. Information provided by the Veterinary Counsellor confirms that both countries are able to conform to the requirements and their veterinary services can provide certification in accordance with the conditions.

Revised conditions for importation of laboratory rats and mice have now been prepared. These conditions do not specify a list of eligible countries. Any future applications to import from other

countries will be evaluated in a similar manner as Switzerland and Israel without the need to further revise the conditions.

Two other minor changes have been made to clarify requirements which have been the subject of queries from AQIS field staff. The first of these is clause 1.4 where Environment Australia's requirements are updated and clarified. A permit is not required from Environment Australia for importation of *Rattus rattus*, *R. norvegicus*, and *Mus musculus*. The second is in clause 4.3 where physical separation of different consignments in separate microisolators should require that these be of an adequate standard of isolation. Field staff had questioned microisolators which may be less than adequate in this respect.

Please do not hesitate to contact this office should you have any queries about these conditions.

Yours sincerely,

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Animal Quarantine Policy Branch

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|------------------|------------------------|
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QUARANTINE CONDITIONS FOR THE IMPORTATION OF LABORATORY RATS AND MICE

1 General

- 1.1 Laboratory rats and mice may be imported from countries approved by AQIS. AQIS will consider applications to import from a country, subject to an evaluation and acceptance of the Veterinary Administration's ability to provide health certification for laboratory rats and mice according to the principles of the OIE International Animal Health Code.
- 1.2 Each consignment must be accompanied by a valid "Permit to Import". The permit must be obtained, prior to the export of laboratory animals, from the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) office in the State of import. A processing fee will be charged for the permit.
- 1.3 Each consignment must be accompanied by an Animal Health Certificate signed by the Official Veterinarian and the veterinarian in charge of the donor colony. An Official Veterinarian is a civil service veterinarian or a specially appointed veterinarian as authorised by the Veterinary Administration of the exporting country. Each page of the Health Certificate should bear an Official stamp.
- 1.4 Under the *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982*, permission to import any live animal, other than those exempted in Schedule 5 or 6 of that Act, must be obtained from Environment Australia. *Rattus rattus* (black rat), *R. norvegicus* (brown rat) and *Mus musculus* (house mouse) are species included in Schedule 5 and do not require a permit. Other species may. Further information may be obtained from:

The Director
Wildlife Protection
Environment Australia
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601

Ph (02) 6274 2291
Fax (02) 6274 1921
E-mail wps@ea.gov.au

website: <http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/wildlife/intro.htm>

- 1.5 The importation of genetically modified laboratory animals is subject to guidelines published by the Genetic Manipulation Advisory Committee (GMAC) which can be contacted through:

The Secretary
GMAC

GPO Box 2183
CANBERRA ACT 2601

- 1.6 The Animal Health Certificate must:
- provide details of the certifying authority, identification of the animals, place of origin of the animals, consignor and consignee, destination and means of transport;
 - contain the certification statements listed in Section 2.
- 1.7 In the event of a consignment arriving in Australia without the correct certification or in any other way not meeting these requirements, the consignment may be detained in quarantine, returned to the country of origin or destroyed without recompense.
- 1.8 The importer or agent must nominate a person who will be accessible to AQIS officers and who will accept responsibility for ensuring that all import requirements are met.
- 1.9 Fees may be applied by AQIS to cover costs associated with inspection, collection, testing, processing, or quarantine and any Australian Government veterinary supervision of the consignment.
- 1.10 Nothing in these conditions prevents importers from specifying their own disease-freedom or testing requirements, as part of a commercial contract.
- 1.11 Conditions of importation may be varied or reviewed at any time at the discretion of The Director.

2 CERTIFICATION

The following certification statements must be provided on the Animal Health Certificate:

- 2.1 There has been no clinical or other evidence of the following diseases or infectious agents in the donor colony during the 12 months prior to export
- hantaviruses
 - lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus
 - ectromelia virus
 - rabies
- 2.2 The colony containing the animals for export is housed in accommodation which precludes access by wildlife, including rodents and insect vectors, and is free of infestation with ectoparasites.
- 2.3 In the 30 days prior to export, the animals to be exported and the animals in contact with them have remained clinically healthy and free from evidence of the diseases listed in clause 2.1.
- 2.4 Each animal for export has been examined by an Official Veterinarian within the 48 hours prior to loading and is free from evidence of infectious and contagious disease and ectoparasites. SPF animals in microisolators are exempt from such examination, but certification by an Official Veterinarian and the Veterinarian in charge of the donor colony attesting to these animals' SPF status must be provided.

3 TRANSPORT

Animals should be transported in a container as specified under International Air Transport Association (IATA), Live Animal Regulations.

4 POST-ARRIVAL QUARANTINE AND RELEASE FROM QUARANTINE

- 4.1 On arrival, all litter in the containers must be destroyed under the direction of an AQIS officer. The materials should be disposed of at the receiving facility.
- 4.2 The rats and mice must be imported into quarantine premises (Section 46A of the Quarantine Act 1908) approved and registered for that purpose by AQIS. They must be kept in secure containers in a lockable room. Keys are to be held by nominated responsible persons. The imported rats and mice will be eligible for release from quarantine only if tested in accordance with 4.5. Otherwise they will remain in permanent quarantine.
- 4.3 Within approved quarantine premises, imported animals must be kept physically separated from all other animals. Different consignments of imported animals may be kept separate from each other by microisolators, which must be of a level of individual security acceptable to AQIS. Non-imported animals may be introduced into the quarantine room for breeding or for use as sentinels for immunocompromised imported animals. Such animals will remain in quarantine until the imported animals are released from quarantine. Husbandry and handling practices, including the movement of animal handlers, must ensure the maintenance of quarantine of the imported animals.
- 4.4 If, while in post arrival quarantine, any imported animal or in-contact animal is diagnosed as, or suspected to be, affected by disease due to infection with a hantavirus, lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus or ectromelia virus, the manager of the import facility must notify AQIS immediately.
- 4.5 Imported rats and mice may be released from quarantine to enable distribution to institutions registered by a State or Territory (ie institutions which have Animal Ethics Clearance to hold rodents) if the manager of the import facility provides to AQIS certification
 - 4.5.1 that all imported rats and mice have been isolated from other animals in the laboratory as outlined in 4.3, and
 - 4.5.2 that during the post arrival quarantine period the imported rats and mice (and any in contact animals) have remained clinically healthy and free from evidence of the diseases listed in clause 2.1, and
 - 4.5.3 that negative results were obtained to serological tests which were performed within 30-90 days post-arrival on a statistically valid sample of the imported animals for the viruses listed below:
 - hantaan virus - ELISA (if and when a group specific test for hantaviruses becomes available, that test must be applied)
 - lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus - ELISA
 - ectromelia virus (mice only) - ELISA

Animals must be at least 8 weeks of age at the time of testing and the sample size must be sufficient to detect a 5% prevalence of infection at a 99% confidence level (see annex). A report containing the test methods, the name of the testing laboratory, and numbers of animals tested must be attached to the certification. Test methods other than those mentioned may be used with prior approval from AQIS.

- 4.6 In the case of imported immuno-compromised rats or mice, sentinels of the same species (8-12 weeks of age) must be placed in the boxes with the imported animals on arrival in quarantine. They must remain there for a minimum of 45 days but not more than 120 days prior to testing for the diseases listed above. The number of sentinels to be placed in contact with the colony is calculated from the number of animals in the colony to give 99% confidence of detecting disease if it is present at 5% prevalence. A few additional animals should be added to the colony to allow for incidental losses.
- 4.7 If any animals tested as described in 4.5 yield positive test results, the officer in charge of the colony shall immediately notify AQIS. AQIS will give directions on the destruction and disposal of animals which yielded positive test results and those in contact.
- 4.8 Except in the case of *Mus musculus*, *Rattus rattus* and *Rattus norvegicus* permission must be obtained from Environment Australia to transfer imported animals and their offspring from quarantine premises to other premises.

5 CONDITIONS FOR IMPORTED LABORATORY RATS AND MICE WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN TESTED FOR RELEASE FROM QUARANTINE

- 5.1 For imported animals which are not certified as specified in condition 4.5:
 - 5.1.1 the imported animals will remain in quarantine but may be transferred to equivalent quarantine premises with prior written permission from AQIS; following such transfer they must be physically isolated from all other animals not of the same quarantine status;
 - 5.1.2 at the end of their use in research imported animals must be humanely destroyed and cadavers destroyed in an AQIS-approved manner (ie autoclaving or incineration);
 - 5.1.3 progeny of imported animals and any in-contact animals must be treated in the same way unless tested for release from quarantine as described in “Conditions for the release from quarantine of progeny of laboratory rats and mice imported under the 1985 conditions” dated 1 March 1997.

6 REGISTER OF IMPORTED RATS AND MICE

A register of all imported rats and mice held in quarantine must be kept by a nominated person. The register shall contain the following information:

- source of animals
- identity of animals
- numbers of animals:- imported, used, born, weaned, transferred, died.
- cause of death

All animals on the premises must be identifiable as to their source and quarantine status.

DAVID BANKS
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Animal Quarantine Policy Branch