



October 15, 2024

To: CDC Animal Care Facilities (ACF)

Subject: Announcement regarding submission of requests to clear dogs for entry

Dear ACF Partners:

We are issuing this announcement to inform you that effective immediately our Zoonoses Prevention and Import Regulations Team staff will only respond to requests to clear dogs for entry (except for service dogs, see below) during normal business hours and excluding federal holidays,¹ Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm, local time. Requests to clear dogs for entry outside of these hours will be reviewed the next business day and, in the order received, based on a completed request in SAFE TraQ.

Requests to clear dogs for entry must be submitted via SAFE TraQ. Please do not contact CDC Veterinary Medical Officers or the Port Health Stations (except for service dogs outside of normal business hours or during federal holidays, see below) with requests to clear dogs for entry by phone, text, or non-SAFE TraQ email, because they will not respond to these requests. Our staff aim to respond to requests to clear dogs for entry in SAFE TraQ within 8 hours of receiving a completed request. For requests received before 1:00 P.M., local time, our staff will typically respond within the same business day. For requests, received after 1:00 P.M., local time, our staff will typically respond the next business day.

In order for our staff to clear dogs for entry, the ACF must enter all required documentation and information into SAFE TraQ before submitting a request to clear a dog for entry.² Dogs will not be cleared for entry based on incomplete documentation and/or missing or inaccurate information. Submission of incomplete documentation or missing information could further result in delays in clearing dogs for entry because requests will be cleared only if complete and based on the order they are received.

Dogs must be held at the ACF until the ACF receives written clearance from both CDC and CBP. CDC's written clearance to release an animal for entry to the United States will be sent to the ACF as an email. CBP's concurrence with CDC's clearance may be sent through a variety of ways, e.g., by email, through the Automated Commercial Enterprise (ACE) system, or clearance of post-entry or air waybill (AWB). CDC advises ACFs to familiarize themselves with CBP's clearance process at their local port of entry. Questions regarding CBP's clearance process may be directed to the CBP Port Director at your local port.

¹ Federal holidays are established by statute at 5 U.S.C. 6103. For a list of the federal holiday schedule, please see <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/federal-holidays/#url=Overview>.

² See Technical Instructions for CDC-Registered Animal Care Facilities (ACF) (Version May 8, 2024, Requirement #23).

Our staff will continue to expedite requests to clear service dogs for entry to the United States. We aim to respond to the expedited requests to clear service dogs within 4 hours of receipt of a completed request. During normal business hours and outside of federal holidays, ACFs are advised to follow the same procedures for service dogs as they follow for other dogs. In order to expedite such requests, the ACF must enter all required documentation and information into SAFE TraQ before requesting release of the dog. Our staff are unable to expedite requests for clearance based on incomplete documentation and/or missing or inaccurate information.

To request clearance of a service dog outside of normal business hours (or on federal holidays), please upload all required documents in SAFE TraQ and select “**Needs VMO review**” and then select “**Pending CDC clearance**” in SAFE TraQ. If you do not receive a written response **within 4 hours**, please contact the CDC Port Health Station by phone.

When contacting the CDC Port Health Station by phone, please inform them that you are an ACF requesting Veterinary Medical Officer assistance to clear a service dog and ask them to contact the Zoonoses Prevention and Import Regulations Team. They will alert the on-call CDC Veterinary Medical Officer to the request. Please do not contact CDC Veterinary Medical Officers by phone, text, or non-SAFE TraQ email. Service dogs, like other dogs, must be held at the ACF until the ACF receives written clearance from both CDC and CBP to release the dog for entry to the United States.

To qualify as a service dog, the dog must be individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a qualified individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other disability. The service dog must also have been accompanied by an individual with a disability upon its arrival in the United States. Emotional support or comfort dogs do not qualify as service dogs.

This announcement only applies to requests to clear dogs for entry into the United States and does not apply to other incidents that must be reported as required by 42 CFR 71.51. These include the arrival of an ill dog at the ACF and the occurrence of suspected or confirmed communicable diseases in dogs, including the presence of ectoparasites (i.e., ticks and fleas). The ACF are required to report these incidents immediately (within 24 hours) to CDC Port Health Station staff via phone or Veterinary Medical Officers through SAFE TraQ. The ACF should also immediately report (within 24 hours) other serious incidents that may affect public health and safety, e.g., death of a dog in quarantine, dog bite injuries, dog escapes from facility, access by unauthorized persons or animals to quarantined areas of the facility, to CDC Port Health Station staff via phone and CDC Veterinary Medical Officers by email. Please gather all relevant information and be prepared to discuss the nature of the emergency when calling the CDC Port Health Station, e.g., animal/importer information, health status of animal, description of incident, actions taken thus far.