

# WORTH REPEATING Special Rules for Bringing Pet Birds into the United States

United States Department of Agriculture,  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection  
Service, Veterinary Services

## What is a Pet Bird?

A pet bird is defined as any bird — except for poultry — intended for the personal pleasure of its individual owner and not for resale. Poultry, even if kept as pets, are imported under separate rules and quarantined at USDA animal import centers. Birds classified as poultry include chickens, turkeys, pheasants, partridge, ducks, geese, swans, doves, peafowl, and similar avian species.

## Importing a Pet Bird

Special Rules for Bringing a Pet Bird into the United States (from all countries but Canada)

- USDA Quarantine
- Quarantine Space Reservation
- Fee in Advance
- Foreign Health Certificate
- Final Shipping Arrangements
- Two-Bird Limit

If you're bringing your pet bird into the country, you must . . .

**Quarantine your bird (or birds) for at least 30 days in a USDA-operated import facility at one of nine ports of entry.** The bird, which must be caged when you bring it in, will be transferred to a special isolation cage at the import facility. Privately owned cages cannot be stored by USDA. Birds will be cared for by veterinarians and other personnel of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

**Reserve quarantine space for the bird.** A bird without a reservation will be accepted only if space is available. If none exists, this bird either will be refused entry or be transported — at your expense — to another entry port where there is space. In any case, the fee described below must be paid before the bird is placed in quarantine.

**Pay USDA an advance fee of \$40 to be applied to the cost of quarantine services and necessary tests and examinations.** Currently, quarantine costs are expected to average \$80 for one bird or \$100 per isolation cage if more than one bird is put in a cage. These charges may change without notice. You may also have to pay private companies for brokerage and transportation services to move the bird from the port of entry to the USDA import facility.

**Obtain a health certificate in the nation of the bird's origin.** This is a certificate signed by a **national government** veterinarian stating that the bird has been examined, shows no evidence of communicable disease, and is being exported in accordance with the laws of that country. The certificate must be signed within 30 days of the time the birds arrive in the United States. If not in English, it must be translated at your cost. Please note that Form 17-23, referred to later, includes an acceptable health certificate form in English.

**Arrange for shipping the bird to its final destination when it is released from quarantine.** A list of brokers for each of the nine ports of entry may be requested from USDA port veterinarians at the time quarantine space is reserved. (See addressed to follow.) Most brokers offer transportation services from entry port to final destination.

**Bring no more than two psittacine birds (parrots, parakeets and other hookbills) per family into the United States during any one year.** Larger groups of these birds are imported under separate rules for commercial shipments of birds.

Rules Effective January 15, 1980

## Why all the Rules?

Serious disease of birds and poultry can be carried by pet birds entering this country. Parrots from South America are believed to have caused an outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease in southern California in 1971-74. Eradication cost \$56 million and the destruction of 12 million birds, mostly laying hens. Import rules for personally owned pet birds were put into effect in 1972 and strengthened in 1980. These new rules, effective January 15, 1980, provide a better defense against the introduction of this highly contagious disease.

## Ports of Entry for Personally Owned Pet Birds

Listed below are the nine ports of entry for personally owned pet birds. To reserve quarantine space for your bird, write to the port veterinarian at the city when you'll

be arriving and request Form 17-23. Return the completed form, together with a certified check or money order for \$40 made payable to USDA, to the same address. The balance of the fee will be due later before the bird is released from quarantine.

PORT VETERINARIAN  
ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH  
INSPECTION SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE  
(CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE)

New York, New York 11430  
Miami, Florida 33152  
Brownsville, Texas 78520  
Laredo, Texas 78040  
El Paso, Texas 79902  
Nogales, Arizona 85621  
San Ysidro, California 92073  
Los Angeles, California  
(Mailing address Lawndale, CA  
90261)  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

## The Quarantine Period

During quarantine, pet birds will be kept in individually controlled isolation cages to prevent any infection from spreading. Psittacine or hookbilled birds will be identified with a leg band. They will be fed a medicated feed as required by the U.S. Public Health Service to prevent psittacosis, a flu-like disease transmissible to humans. Food and water will be readily available to the birds. Young, immature birds needing daily hand-feeding cannot be accepted because removing them from the isolation cage for feeding would interrupt the 30-day quarantine. During the quarantine, APHIS veterinarians will test the birds to make certain they are free of any communicable disease of poultry. Infected birds will be refused entry; at the owner's option they will either be returned to the country of origin (at the owner's expense) or humanely destroyed.

*continued on next page*

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**Special Exceptions**

No government quarantine (and therefore no advance reservations or fees) and no foreign health certificate are required for:

■ **U.S. birds taken out of the country for 60 days or less if special arrangements are made in advance.** Before leaving the United States, you must get a health certificate for the bird from a veterinarian accredited by USDA and make certain it is identified with a tattoo or numbered leg band. The health certificate, with this identification on it, must be presented at the time of re-entry. While out of the country, you must keep your pet bird separate from other birds. Remember that only two psittacine or hookbilled birds per family per year may enter the United States. Birds returning to the United States may come in through any one of the nine ports of entry listed earlier. There are also certain other specified ports of entry for these birds depending upon the time of arrival and other factors. Contact APHIS officials for information on this prior to leaving the country.

■ **Birds from Canada.** Pet birds may enter the United States from Canada on your signed statement that they have been in your possession for at least 90 days, were kept separate from other birds during the period, and are healthy. As with other countries, only two psittacine birds per family per year may enter the United States from Canada. Birds must be inspected by an APHIS veterinarian at designated ports of entry for land, air, and ocean shipments. These ports are subject to change, so for current information, contact APHIS/USDA officials at the address listed in the section on U.S. agencies.

Pet birds from Canada are not quarantined because Canada's animal disease control and eradication programs and import rules are similar to those of the United States.

**Other U.S. Agencies Involved With Bird Imports**

In addition to the U.S. Public Health Service requirement mentioned earlier, U.S. Department of the Interior rules require an inspection by one of its officials to assure that an imported bird is not in the rare or endangered species category, is not

an illegally imported migratory bird, and is not an agricultural pest or injurious to humans. Also, of course, the U.S. Customs Service maintains a constant alert for smuggled birds. For details from these agencies contact:

Division of Law Enforcement  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20240

Bureau of Epidemiology  
Quarantine Division  
Center for Disease Control  
U.S. Public Health Service  
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

U.S. Customs Service  
Department of the Treasury  
Washington, DC 20229

For additional information on USDA/APHIS regulations, contact:  
Import-Export Staff  
Veterinary Services, APHIS  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Hyattsville, Maryland 20782

**Two Serious Threats to Birds**

**Exotic Newcastle Disease**

As a bird owner, you should know the symptoms of exotic Newcastle disease, the devastating disease of poultry and other birds mentioned elsewhere in this pamphlet. If your birds show signs of incoordination and breathing difficulties — or if there should be any unusual die-off among them — contact your local veterinarian or animal health official immediately. Place dead birds in plastic bags and refrigerate them for submittal to a diagnostic laboratory. Keep in mind that this disease is highly contagious and you should isolate any newly purchased birds for at least 30 days. Although exotic Newcastle disease is not a general health hazard, it can cause minor eye infection in humans directly exposed to infected birds.

**Smuggling**

If you're tempted to buy a bird you suspect may have been smuggled into the United States . . . don't! Smuggled birds are a persistent threat to the health of pet birds and poultry flocks in this country. Indications are that many recent outbreaks of exotic Newcastle disease were caused by birds entering the United States illegally. If you have information about the possibility of smuggled birds, report it to any U.S. Customs office or call APHIS at Hyattsville, Maryland (301) 436-8061.