

BILLING CODE: 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2013-0105]

Notice of Availability of Evaluations of the Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Rinderpest Status of a
Region of Patagonia, Argentina

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that we have determined that a region of Argentina, consisting of the areas of Patagonia South and Patagonia North B, is free of foot-and-mouth disease. We are making that determination, as well as an evaluation we have prepared in connection with this action, available for review and comment. In addition, we have prepared an evaluation assessing the rinderpest status of South America, which includes Argentina, and have determined, based on our evaluation, that rinderpest is not present in the entirety of Argentina. We are also making that determination, as well as our evaluation, available for review and comment.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to
<http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=APHIS-2013-0105-0001>.

- Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery: Send your comment to Docket No. APHIS-2013-0105, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238.

Supporting documents and any comments we receive on this docket may be viewed at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2013-0105> or in our reading room, which is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 799-7039 before coming.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Silvia Kreindel, Senior Staff Veterinarian, Regionalization Evaluation Services, National Import Export Services, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 38, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231; (301) 851-3308.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The regulations in 9 CFR part 94 (referred to below as the regulations) govern the importation of certain animals and animal products into the United States to prevent the introduction of various animal diseases, including rinderpest and foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). The regulations prohibit or restrict the importation of live ruminants and swine, and products from these animals, from regions where rinderpest or FMD is considered to exist.

Within part 94, § 94.1 contains requirements governing the importation of ruminants and swine from regions where rinderpest or FMD exists and the importation of the meat of any ruminants or swine from regions where rinderpest or FMD exists to prevent the introduction of either disease into the United States. We consider rinderpest and FMD to exist in all regions

except those listed in accordance with paragraph (a)(2) of that section as free of rinderpest and FMD.

Section 94.11 of the regulations contains requirements governing the importation of meat of any ruminants or swine from regions that have been determined to be free of rinderpest and FMD, but that are subject to certain restrictions because of their proximity to or trading relationships with rinderpest- or FMD-affected regions. Such regions are listed in accordance with paragraph (a)(2) of that section.

The regulations in 9 CFR part 92, § 92.2, contain requirements for requesting the recognition of the animal health status of a region (as well as for the approval of the export of a particular type of animal or animal product to the United States from a foreign region). If, after review and evaluation of the information submitted in support of the request, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) believes the request can be safely granted, APHIS will make its evaluation available for public comment through a notice published in the Federal Register. Following the close of the comment period, APHIS will review all comments received and will make a final determination regarding the request that will be detailed in another notice published in the Federal Register.

In 2003, the Government of Argentina submitted a request to recognize the region located south of latitude 42° south, known as Patagonia South, as free of FMD. In 2008, Argentina expanded its request to include the region immediately north of latitude 42° south, known as Patagonia North B. These two areas are referred to below as the Patagonia Region of Argentina.

In response to this request, APHIS has conducted a qualitative risk assessment to evaluate the FMD status of the Patagonia Region of Argentina. Based on this evaluation, APHIS has found that FMD is not present in the Patagonia Region and that the surveillance, prevention, and

control measures implemented by Argentina in the area under consideration as a region free of FMD are sufficient to minimize the likelihood of introducing FMD into the United States via imports of FMD-susceptible species or products. However, because of its proximity to or trading relationships with FMD-affected regions, APHIS has determined that it is necessary to impose certain restrictions on the importation of meat of any ruminants or swine from the Patagonia Region of Argentina.

Rinderpest has never been established in South America. No South American country has ever reported the disease except Brazil, which had an outbreak in 1921 that was limited in scope and quickly eradicated. Furthermore, the global distribution of rinderpest has diminished significantly in recent years as a result of the Food and Agriculture Organization Global Rinderpest Eradication Program. The last known cases of rinderpest worldwide occurred in the southern part of the “Somali pastoral ecosystem” consisting of southern Somalia, eastern Kenya, and southern Ethiopia. In May 2011, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) announced its recognition of global rinderpest freedom.

Based on the foregoing conclusions, APHIS has found that the Patagonia Region of Argentina is free of rinderpest and FMD.

Therefore, in accordance with § 92.2(e), we are announcing the availability of our evaluation of the FMD status of the region under consideration, as well as an evaluation assessing the rinderpest status of South America, for public review and comment. We are also announcing the availability of an environmental assessment (EA) entitled “Recognition of Patagonia Region in Argentina as Free of Foot-and-Mouth Disease,” which has been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing

the procedural provision of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372). The evaluation and the EA may be viewed on the Regulations.gov Web site or in our reading room. (Instructions for accessing Regulations.gov and information on the location and hours of the reading room are provided under the heading ADDRESSES at the beginning of this notice.) The evaluations, as well as relevant information used in the review process, are available by contacting the person listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT. Information submitted in support of Argentina's original request for recognition may also be viewed on the APHIS Web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/animals/reg_request.shtml by following the link for "Previous regionalization requests and supporting documentation." Information submitted in support of the expanded request may be viewed on the Regulations.gov Web site (see ADDRESSES above for instructions for accessing Regulations.gov).

After reviewing any comments we receive, we will announce our decision regarding the disease status of the region of Argentina under consideration with respect to FMD and rinderpest and the import status of susceptible animals and products of such animals in a subsequent notice.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 450, 7701-7772, 7781-7786, and 8301-8317; 21 U.S.C. 136 and 136a; 31 U.S.C. 9701; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.4.

Done in Washington, DC, this 16th day of January 2014.

Kevin Shea,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

