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**RESOLUTION NUMBER: 13**

**Approved**

**SOURCE:**

**COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE**

**SUBJECT MATTER:**

**Import Health Requirements for Live Aquatic Animals**

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

At present, there are only United States (US) federal import health requirements for the importation of live salmonid species and their gametes (United States Fish and Wildlife Service), as well as eight cyprinid species considered susceptible to spring viremia of carp virus and four tilapia species considered susceptible to tilapia lake virus (United States Department of Agriculture). All other live aquatic animals enter the US with no federal animal health requirements. In recent years, detections of World Organization for Animal Health listed pathogens and other emerging pathogens, such as red sea bream iridovirus, infectious hypodermal and hematopoietic necrosis virus, and tilapia lake virus, have been linked to unregulated imports. The introduction of these pathogens causes livestock losses, facility quarantines, export bans, and the need for enhanced surveillance. Import controls would not be intended to ban trade but to ensure that aquatic animals entering the US are healthy and do not pose risks to domestic aquaculture production or natural resources.

**RESOLUTION:**

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to act proactively to prevent the introduction of foreign aquatic animal pathogens that pose threats to the health of aquatic livestock and natural resources through untested live animal and product imports. As such, USAHA requests USDA-APHIS-VS initiate work to zone the United States (US) as free from World Organization of Animal Health (WOAH) listed pathogens that have never been detected in the US, such as salmon alphavirus, epizootic hematopoietic necrosis virus, yellowhead virus-1, and *Perkinsus olseni*. Further, USAHA requests USDA-APHIS-VS immediately impose import controls for those pathogens from which the US demonstrates absence, following the WOAHA guidelines to demonstrate freedom.

**INTERIM RESPONSE:**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and appreciates the opportunity to

respond.

APHIS recognizes the risk of introducing aquatic animal pathogens into the United States through the importation of live animals and products of unknown health status and is working to address priority pathogens of concern for aquaculture. This work includes identifying pathogens that meet provisions established by the World Trade Organization to establish import controls. In 2022, APHIS finalized risk evaluations for red sea bream iridovirus, decapod iridescent virus 1, and infectious hypothermal and hematopoietic necrosis virus. APHIS is also working on a risk evaluation for common salmonid pathogens, which includes salmon alphavirus and epizootic hematopoietic necrosis virus. APHIS will use the conclusions of these evaluations to identify possible pathogen introduction mitigations, including potential import controls of susceptible live aquatic animals and their products, if appropriate. APHIS posts completed risk evaluations on its [USDA APHIS | Aquatic Animal Diseases](#) web page. Once the pending evaluations are finalized, APHIS will share the results with the Committee on Aquaculture.

In addition to evaluating the risk introductions of key aquatic animal pathogens, APHIS is organizing the data necessary to make official freedom declarations based on historical freedom for key pathogens affecting farm-raised aquatic species, including epizootic hematopoietic necrosis virus. APHIS anticipates such freedom declarations will not only provide trade benefits but further support the case for instituting federal import controls of these pathogens.