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SUBJECT: Request for Emergency Approval of a New Information Collection for Import of Dogs from Countries Affected with African Swine Fever

SUMMARY: The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is submitting to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) an information collection request for an emergency 6-month approval for information collection activities connected to the prevention of African swine fever (ASF), in particular, conditions for import of dogs from countries or regions affected with ASF.

APHIS' primary mission is to protect the health of U.S. agriculture and natural resources against invasive pests and diseases. This includes the prevention, control, and eradication of animal diseases to safeguard animal, plant, and human health. Disease prevention is the most effective method for maintaining a healthy animal and plant population and for enhancing the United States' ability to compete globally in animal and animal product trade. In situations where a disease risk is sufficiently severe and fast-moving so that the regular regulatory process cannot provide adequate relief, APHIS employs Federal Orders to set trade restrictions quickly to control, eradicate, or prevent a disease threat. On June 21, to help prevent the entry of ASF into the United States, APHIS issued a Federal Order setting restrictive conditions for the import of dogs from countries or regions affected with ASF.

BACKGROUND: ASF is a contagious hemorrhagic disease of wild and domestic pigs. It is often characterized by high morbidity and mortality rates. Some isolates can cause animal death as quickly as a week after infection. There is no effective treatment for ASF-infected swine and no vaccine. The disease can be spread not only by contact with other affected animals, even animals of different species (such as dogs), but also via materials such as bedding or packing materials. ASF is a notifiable disease to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The disease does not pose a risk to human health or food safety. ASF is a critical threat; the disease has spread globally in recent years, and the United States has millions of susceptible swine, including feral swine.

ASF is currently widespread and endemic in sub-Saharan Africa, parts of West Africa, and Sardinia. In the last decade, ASF has spread through Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. In the last few years, the disease has continued to spread in the European Union, primarily in wild boar. (Notably, APHIS has identified feral swine – of which there are currently between 5 million and 9 million spread in all areas of the United States – as a significant possible vector in an outbreak here, as it has been in the European Union.) In August 2018, China reported the first ASF detections in its domestic swine population. ASF continued spreading widely throughout Asian countries in 2019 with additional outbreaks reported between 2020 and 2021.

As of December 1, 2020, the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service identified an inventory of 77.5 million hogs and pigs in the United States. According to the USDA National Animal Health Monitoring System, the U.S. swine industry is worth more than \$22.5 billion, which without proper preparation could be put at risk if ASF was introduced into the United States.

An ASF outbreak of any size or type, particularly a multistate outbreak, would likely have an immediate, sizeable, and lingering economic impact for an extended period. An outbreak would instantly disrupt international exports of meat, meat products, and swine byproducts. The value of lost exports would be a substantial detriment to the economy and would also affect interstate commerce. Farms would shut down, causing unemployment and costs both on-farm and in related sectors such as feed production and supply. In addition, an ASF response effort would involve direct costs for depopulation, indemnity payments, animal disposal, disinfection, and movement control measures. Consumers would sustain additional indirect costs and potentially suffer food insecurity. The lack of a vaccine makes prevention of disease entry of utmost importance, and thorough preparation for an emergency response crucial. If ASF were to be detected in the United States, there would be severe economic impacts on U.S. livestock producers, their communities, and the economy.

In the past few years, APHIS has seen an increase in the number of dog import permits APHIS has issued, rising from 568 in fiscal year (FY) 2018 to 2,669 in FY 2020 with numbers on track to hit 3,500 in FY 2021. Of the currently received permits, 1,465 originated in ASF-affected countries, accounting for 7,085 dogs entering the United States from these countries. APHIS has determined that dogs imported from ASF-affected countries for resale purposes (along with their bedding) represent a possible pathway for the introduction of disease. APHIS is requiring all dogs imported into the United States for resale from a region in which ASF exists, or is reasonably believed to exist, to meet the import requirements outlined below. Importers must obtain an import permit and submit written documentation verifying completion of the requirements, including disposal of animal bedding, microchip identification, and post-entry bath:

- The dogs and their shipping crate/container must be free of dirt, wood shavings, hay, straw, or any other organic/natural bedding material.
- All bedding that accompanies the dogs during transit must be properly disposed of at the U.S. post-entry points of concentration.
- Each dog must have an ISO-compliant microchip implanted, and the individual microchip number must be verified immediately before each animal is bathed.

- Each dog must be bathed at the U.S. post entry point of concentration within 2 calendar days of arrival in the United States. Bathing must be documented in the VS Dog Import record, along with information about the dog, the importer, the country of origin, U.S. port of entry and post-entry points of concentration, and date of arrival,

Delays in obtaining approval of this information collection could have significant repercussions on the Agency's ability to respond efficiently and effectively as events unfold early in an outbreak. APHIS will collect information using a new Dog Import Form as well as existing permit forms. As multiple pathways for infection are possible, all likely sources of virus introduction should be mitigated, and producers should work to minimize the risk of spread from imported animals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.