

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**Interstate Movement of Certain Land Tortoises**  
**OMB NO. 0579-0156**

**A. Justification**

**1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.**

The Animal Health Protection Act (AHPA) of 2002 is the primary Federal law governing the protection of animal health. The law gives the Secretary of Agriculture broad authority to prevent, control, and eliminate domestic diseases as well as to take actions to prevent and to manage exotic diseases. Disease prevention is the most effective method for maintaining a healthy animal population and enhancing the United States' ability to compete in the world market of animal and animal product trade. The AHPA is contained in Title X, Subtitle E, Sections 10401 to 10418 of P.L. 107-171, May 13, 2002, the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 [7 U.S.C. 8301 et. seq.].

In connection with this mission, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Veterinary Services (VS) unit enforces regulations regarding the importation of animals and animal products and the prevention of foreign animal disease incursions into the United States. These regulations are contained in Title 9 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR).

Title 9 CFR Part 74 currently prohibits the importation and restricts the interstate movement of three tortoise species: The leopard tortoise, the African spurred tortoise, and the Bell's hingeback tortoise. APHIS implemented these restrictions in 2001 to prevent the introduction and spread of exotic ticks known to be vectors of heartwater disease, an acute, infectious disease of cattle and other ruminants. Leopard, African spurred, and hingeback tortoises already in the United States can be moved interstate for sale, health care, adoption, or export to another country only if they are accompanied by a State health certificate (also known as a certificate of veterinary inspection).

APHIS is asking OMB to renew its approval of these information-gathering activities for an additional 3 years.

**2. Indicate how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.**

**State Health Certificate; (9 CFR 74.1); (Individual; Business)**

The interstate movement of leopard, African spurred, and Bell's hingeback tortoises requires each tortoise to be accompanied by a signed State health certificate stating the animal was examined and found free of ticks within 30 days prior to movement. Certification ensures the interstate movement of the tortoises poses no risk of spreading exotic ticks within the United States.

The examination and certificate signature must be from a Federal or accredited veterinarian. State health certificates must contain at a minimum the name, address, and telephone number of the owner; information identifying the animal such as collar or tattoo number; breed; age; sex; color; distinctive marks; vaccination history; and certifications from both the owner and the veterinarian that all information is true and accurate. APHIS uses the information it collects to identify each tortoise and to document the state of the animal's health for transport across State and national boundaries. Owners and businesses may transport the tortoises to and from the veterinarian.

**3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.**

APHIS permits owners to use State health certificates for this requirement. Each State has its own version of health certificate and very few make them available electronically. For these reasons, the certificate is not a candidate for electronic submission other than fax or email transfer to APHIS.

**4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purpose described in item 2 above.**

The information that APHIS collects is not available from any other source. APHIS is the only Federal agency responsible for preventing communicable diseases of animals from spreading within the United States.

**5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

APHIS estimates 100 percent of the business respondents are small entities. The information collected is the absolute minimum needed to move specific species of tortoises interstate with minimal risk of spreading heartwater disease within the United States. The burden consists of transporting the tortoises to and from the veterinarian's office, examining them, and preparing health certificates for each animal within 30 days of their movement.

**6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.**

If the information was collected less frequently or not collected, APHIS would be forced to ban the interstate movement of all leopard, African spurred, and Bell's hingeback tortoises, causing economic harm to U.S. tortoise breeders.

**7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the general information collection guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.**

- **requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;**  
A current State health certificate must accompany each tortoise each time it is moved between states.
- **requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;**
- **requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;**
- **requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than 3 years;**
- **in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;**
- **requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;**
- **that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or**
- **requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secret, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.**

No other special circumstances exist that would require this collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the general information collection guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.

**8. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting form, and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB.**

APHIS engaged in productive consultations by email and phone with the following individuals regarding the information APHIS collects to administer its tortoise import requirements. We discussed the APHIS focus and mission for the prevention of foreign animal diseases (FADs) of concern to our national herd and flocks. The species of tortoises prohibited entry to the United States have been considered major carriers/vectors of Heartwater Disease, a FAD that can have devastating consequences for ruminants. We also discussed with them how we and they obtain the necessary data and how frequently; how much data is available; the convenience and clarity of reporting formats and other collection instruments; and the clarity of, and necessity for, any recordkeeping requirements.

The individuals had questions on why other reptiles were not also regulated as well, and what were more reasonable options available for regulatory change. APHIS addressed their questions by discussing the methods of review they utilize in support of interstate movement of land tortoises which includes reviewing updated science concerning the role of tortoise species in the epidemiology of the disease. APHIS will also permit the import of documented captive reared animals on a case-by-case basis, especially privately owned tortoises from non-Heartwater Disease regions. The respondents had no concerns with these methods and had no further recommendations.

Ivana Stojadinov  
NRN America, Inc.  
3513 Hopkins Road,  
Krum, Texas 76249  
Phone: (940) 482-3382

Jennifer Donato, Registrar  
Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute  
3001 Connecticut Ave. NW, MRC 5507  
Washington, DC 20013-7012  
Phone: (202) 633-3239

Matt Evans, Assistant Curator  
Smithsonian's National Zoo's Reptile Discovery Center  
3001 Connecticut Ave. NW, MRC 5507  
Washington, DC 20013-7012  
Phone: (202) 633-4888

On Thursday, July 7, 2022, APHIS published in the Federal Register (87 FR 40483), a 60-day notice seeking public comments on its plan to request a 3-year renewal of this collection of information. APHIS received no comments from the public.

**9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than reenumeration of contractors or grantees.**

This information collection activity involves no payments or gifts to respondents.

**10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.**

No additional assurance of confidentiality is provided with this information collection. All information obtained in this collection shall not be disclosed except in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552a.

**11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.**

This information collection activity will ask no questions of a personal or sensitive nature.

**12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated.**

- **Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in Item 13 of OMB Form 83-I.**

See APHIS Form 71. Burden estimates were developed from discussions with U.S. tortoise owners and breeders, persons associated with tortoise adoption programs, animal advocacy representatives, and accredited veterinarians. The estimated number of respondents is 50 per year, with 5 responses per respondent, totaling 375 hours per year. Owners and businesses typically incur 2 hours of burden per certificate (including 1 hour for travel) and the examining veterinarian typically incurs 1 hour of burden.

- **Provide estimates of annualized cost to Federal respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories.**

APHIS estimates the total annualized cost to the above respondents to be \$20,013. APHIS arrived at this figure by multiplying the total burden hours (375) by the estimated average hourly wage of the above respondents (\$36.83) and then multiplying the result by 1.449 to capture benefit costs.

The average hourly rates used to calculate the estimates include the following:

<b>SOCC Code</b>	<b>Average Salary</b>	<b>Occupation Description</b>
<b>29-1131</b>	\$52.84	Veterinarians
<b>45-2021</b>	\$20.81	Animal Breeders
	<b>\$36.83</b>	<b>Average Hourly Salary</b>

The rates were found at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_stru.htm](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_stru.htm). This revised method resulted in a slightly decreased average salary from that reported in the previous submission.

According to DOL BLS news release USDL-23-0488 dated March 17, 2023 (see <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecec.pdf>), benefits account for 31 percent of employee costs, and wages account for the remaining 69 percent. Mathematically, total costs can be calculated as a function of wages, resulting in a multiplier of 1.449.

**13. Provide estimates of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information (do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in items 12 and 14). The cost estimates should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component annualized over its expected useful life; and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component.**

No annual cost burden is associated with capital and startup costs, operation and maintenance expenditures, and purchase of services.

**14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Provide a description of the method used to estimate cost and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.**

See APHIS Form 79. The annualized cost to the Federal government is estimated to be \$4,344.

**15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-1.**

	Requested	Program Change Due to New Statute	Program Change Due to Agency Discretion	Change Due to Adjustment in Agency Estimate	Change Due to Potential Violation of the PRA	Previously Approved
Annual Number of Responses	250	0	0	0	0	250
Annual Time Burden (Hr)	375	0	0	0	0	375

In this renewal, there are no changes in the estimated burden as interstate movement levels for these land tortoise breeds have remained steady.

**16. For collections of information whose results are planned to be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication.**

APHIS has no plans to publish information it collects in connection with this program.

**17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.**

There are no forms associated with this information collection.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in the “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act.”**

APHIS can certify compliance with all provisions of the Act.

**B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods**

There are no statistical methods associated with the information collection activities used in this program.