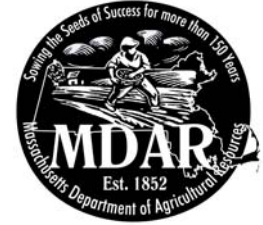


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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES
ISSUES EMERGENCY ORDER TO STRENGTHEN ANIMAL IMPORT LAWS
New Regulations Necessary to Protect Human and Animal Health

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) announced an emergency order today to strengthen the regulations pertaining to animals brought into the Commonwealth from other states. DAR has found that additional requirements are necessary to prevent rescue organizations, shelters and other groups from bringing animals into the state that pose risks to human and animal health.

More than 200 rescue and adoption groups are currently relocating animals to Massachusetts for adoption and sale. Today's emergency order will address the weaknesses in the current import laws in order to minimize health risks in Massachusetts with the following four new requirements:

- **Record keeping** – Every rescue group and shelter will be required to keep and provide detailed records on the animal's place of origin, where it was housed prior to arriving in Massachusetts and ultimately on its new home. Rescue groups and shelters will also be required to keep detailed medical records on each animal to aid in epidemiology investigations and follow-up.
- **Isolation** – Every animal coming into Massachusetts for adoption must be isolated for 48 hours. This will serve two important purposes: 1) Any disease afflicting an animal will have the opportunity to manifest itself after the stress of transport, and 2) Imported animals will have enough time after transport to recover and exhibit either symptoms of disease or behavior consistent with a healthy animal.
- **Veterinary Examination** – Every animal must be given a health exam and issued a health certificate by a Massachusetts veterinarian at the end of the 48-hour isolation period.
- **Registration Form:** Every rescue group and shelter will be required to be registered with the state of Massachusetts and be able to furnish proof of registration so that state enforcement agencies remain aware of all importing entities in the state and the precise nature of their operations.

"We are pleased that Massachusetts is a state in which humane relocation efforts have been so successful in providing homes for stray animals from other states," said Douglas Gillespie, Commissioner of the Department of Agricultural Resources. "But, the time has come to be more vigilant in how we regulate this practice to prevent diseases and other health threats from reaching our residents, pets and livestock in Massachusetts."

Some of the more serious issues that these new regulations seek to minimize include nonexistent or forged health records and certificates, introduction of diseases and parasites not previously found in Massachusetts and importation of animals with serious, contagious diseases such as rabies. "We have seen instances where families with young children were adopting sick dogs right off the back of an out of state transport truck, with few if any steps taken to protect the safety or health of the adopting family or their pets" added Commissioner Gillespie. "These rescue organizations do wonderful work; we just need to ensure that they are doing it right from an animal health and human health perspective" he concluded.

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