Dear Sir/Madam

Importation of Birds to Great Britain for Scientific or Conservation Purposes

The current EU ban on importation of birds other than poultry does provide a derogation for imports to bodies, centres and institutes approved under Balai Directive 92/65/EEC. Defra is prepared to issue individual specific licences for such consignments provided there is a clear conservation or scientific benefit and when import conditions can establish negligible risk of introducing notifiable disease, in particular H5N1.

The conservation or scientific status of each proposed importation must be established before it is permitted. In CITES terms this would be expressed by the “purpose code” which is one of the mandatory fields on a CITES application – under this regime we would consider applications which fall under the following purpose codes:

Z – Zoos
S – Scientific research aimed at the conservation of the species
E – Education
N – Reintroduction or introduction into the wild
B – Breeding aimed at the conservation of the species

The importing premises should be approved under Balai. Please contact your local Divisional Veterinary Manager (DVM) to arrange this. An approved premise must meet stringent bio-security requirements. In summary the site must:

• have clear boundaries between itself and the surrounding area; in order to avoid a health risk
• be able to catch, confine and isolate animals
• have adequate quarantine facilities for isolation and testing animals coming from non-approved sources
• be disease free
• keep records of age, sex, species, blood tests, and diseases
• have an appropriate facility for post-mortems
• be able to dispose of carcasses safely
• employ a vet who is approved by the competent veterinary service

In addition, birds may not be released from such a premises without the prior approval of the DVM.
The exporting premises must meet similar requirements but need not be officially approved. Pre-export testing for Newcastle disease and avian influenza will normally be required and must be carried out in an internationally recognised laboratory.

Post import quarantine will be required equivalent to that specified in our current guidelines for interpretation of Decision 2000/666. These may be found at: http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/control/avianquarantine/standards_conditions.htm

However, your quarantine will not be approved under that legislation but as a necessary part of your Balai approval and some details may therefore need to be varied. Individual testing of imported birds for the presence of avian notifiable disease will be required and the State Veterinary Service will supervise the quarantine process.

Additional licence conditions may be imposed depending on the circumstances of each proposed importation.

If you cannot meet the necessary conditions then the import will not be permitted.

If you would like to take advantage of these arrangements you should contact your local DVM to discuss Balai approval and also apply for an import licence to: State Veterinary Service, International Animal Health Service Delivery Unit (IAHSDU), Ceres House, 2 Searby Road, Lincoln, LN2 4DT.

Please note that it is likely the highly pathogenic H5N1 Asia strain of avian influenza may spread to further countries. In addition, further changes to EU rules are likely towards the end of this year. The conditions detailed above should therefore be regarded as a temporary measure until the future becomes clearer and you should consider the risks of entering into any long-term commitments.

Yours faithfully

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