

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS NOTICE

46-21

10/19/21

UPDATES TO THE EXOTIC ANIMALS ELIGIBLE FOR VOLUNTARY INSPECTION

I. PURPOSE

This notice announces updated definition for certain “exotic animals” as well as the addition of yak to the list of species eligible for voluntary inspection under [9 CFR part 352](#). The notice also instructs Inspectors-in-Charge (IICs) to verify the accuracy of information in the Public Health Information System (PHIS) for all establishments receiving voluntary inspection under these regulations. The rule did not result in any other changes for inspection program personnel (IPP).

II. BACKGROUND

A. On July 15, 2021, FSIS published a final rule ([86 FR 37216](#)) to add yak to the list of exotic species that can be slaughtered under USDA FSIS voluntary inspection. Effective September 13, 2021, “exotic animal” means any reindeer, elk, deer, antelope, water buffalo, bison, buffalo, or yak (9 CFR 352.1(k)). The rule also updates the definitions of the other exotic animal classes to better align with current taxonomy.

B. The revised definitions are:

1. Antelope means any of various ruminant deerlike mammals (family Bovidae) chiefly of Africa and southwest Asia that have a slender lean build and usually horns directed upward and backward (9 CFR 352.1(c));
2. Bison (*Bison bison*), commonly known as the American bison or buffalo, is a species of the genus *Bison* native to North America. Bison includes catalo or cattalo (9 CFR 352.1(e));
3. Buffalo refers to a subtribe Bubalina of the tribe Bovini within the subfamily Bovinae that includes the water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*) and Cape buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) (9 CFR 352.1(f));
4. Catalo or Cattalo means any hybrid animal with bison (*Bison bison*) appearance resulting from direct crossbreeding of bison (*Bison bison*) and cattle (*Bos taurus*) (9 CFR 352.1(g));
5. Deer refers to the any farm-raised species of the family Cervidae (9 CFR 352.1(j));

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6. Elk (*Cervus canadensis*) refers to one of the largest species within the family Cervidae. It is native to North America and in high mountains of Central Asia (9 CFR 352.1(l));
7. Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*), commonly referred to as caribou, is a species within the family Cervidae with circumpolar distribution, native to Arctic, sub-Arctic, tundra, boreal, and mountainous regions of northern Europe, Siberia, and North America (9 CFR 352.1(x));
8. Water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*), commonly known as the domestic water buffalo or Asian water buffalo, is a large bovid originating in the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and China (9 CFR 352.1(aa)); and
9. Yak (*Bos grunniens*) means a long-haired bovid animal originally found throughout the Himalaya region of southern Central Asia and the Tibetan Plateau (9 CFR 352.1(bb)).

III. IIC RESPONSIBILITIES

A. IICs assigned to facilities that perform slaughter or processing under [9 CFR part 352](#) are to discuss the species slaughtered or processed at the establishment in the next weekly meeting. IICs are to verify that the species slaughtered or processed are consistent with the definitions in the final rule.

B. IICs are to verify the PHIS profile information and discuss any possible changes at the next date when voluntary services are requested.

C. IICs are to verify that the information listed in the establishment profile, Application for Voluntary Service (AVS) is accurate. Currently PHIS contains duplicate options for exotics. To ensure all exotics are entered consistently, IICs are to verify:

1. “Voluntary Slaughter – Meat” and the corresponding species selected. IICs are to ensure “Voluntary Slaughter – Exotic” is not selected;
2. “Voluntary Processing – Meat” and the corresponding species selected. IICs are to ensure “Voluntary Processing – Exotic” is not selected; and
3. “Voluntary Processing – Rabbit” is selected for rabbit processing. IICs are to ensure “Voluntary Processing – Meat” with rabbit selected as the species is not used. IICs are to verify this category selection now, even though rabbit is not part of the recent final rule.

D. IICs are to notify their supervisor if changes need to be made to the AVS page in PHIS to include the applicable exotics species on the PHIS establishment profile.

E. IICs are to contact their supervisor if the establishment is slaughtering or processing non-amenable species under FSIS voluntary services other than those listed in this notice.

IV. QUESTIONS

Refer questions regarding this notice to your supervisor or as needed to the Office of Policy and Program Development through [askFSIS](#) or by telephone at 1-800-233-3935. When submitting a question, complete the [web form](#) and select General Inspection Policy for the inquiry type.

NOTE: Refer to [FSIS Directive 5620.1](#), *Using askFSIS*, for additional information on submitting questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rachel A. Edelstein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development