

Submission to Quarantine and Biosecurity Review

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The current AQIS export permit process as applied to companion animals is an unwarranted diversion of governmental and private resources that could be better directed to the detection and control of *incoming* risks. A pet owner who wishes to take a companion animal out of the country will already need to satisfy the requirements of the destination country, and of any sea or air freight or other transport companies involved, and can obtain adequate guidance and instructions from these companies, from veterinarians, and via the Internet. Arranging to transport a pet is a significant commitment of time, energies and money; this commitment is itself an adequate incentive for the pet owner to “get it right.” AQIS does not need to expend its limited resources supervising the movement of pets out of the country, when recent events make clear that more resources need to be focused on animals and threats coming into the country.

Imposing another level of bureaucracy and expense does not enhance any national interest – instead, it works contrary to Australia’s interest and policies by imposing yet more burdens on caring pet owners and effectively encouraging them to abandon their pets to the over-stretched RSPCA and rescue leagues. Any animal that for some reason cannot satisfy an import requirement of a destination country is already in Australia – a system that refuses an export permit in this situation clearly does nothing to protect the domestic environment. Finally, it is unjust to impose such a high AQIS fee structure on private parties, as compared with commercial parties who are profiting by exporting live animals.

Outside of the few special cases, such as the quarantine-free movement of pets to New Zealand, where the destination country specifically requires the involvement of AQIS and/or a specially certified veterinarian, the export permit process should be rationalized to allow pet owners and their trusted veterinarians to make proper provisions on their own. A parent taking a child out of the country does not face an intrusive and expensive permitting process – pet owners should be equally trusted to make the right arrangements when they travel with their animals.