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Rulemaking for Importation of Live Swine and Ruminants and Swine and Ruminant Commodities from Latvia

**Environmental Assessment,
June 2007**

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I. Need for the Proposed Action

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regulates the importation of animals and animal products into the United States to guard against the introduction of animal diseases. APHIS' regulations allow for the importation of animal products from regions considered as free of or low risk for classical swine fever (CSF), and free of swine vesicular disease (SVD) and foot and mouth disease (FMD). The Republic of Latvia (hereafter referred to as Latvia) submitted requests to APHIS in 2004 and 2005 to be considered as a region free of CSF, SVD, and FMD, which would allow Latvia to export swine, ruminants, and derived products including semen, meat, and other animal products (hereafter referred to as "swine and ruminant commodities") to the United States.

APHIS' evaluation of Latvia found that this region meets the requirements for being recognized as low risk for CSF, and free of SVD and FMD. The proposed action is needed to allow the importation of swine and ruminant commodities from Latvia because there is no scientific basis for trade restriction. Allowing the trade of these commodities would be consistent with the 2005 World Organization for Animal Health (commonly referred to as the Office of International des Epizooties (OIE)) Terrestrial Animal Health Code for CSF (chapter 2.1.14), SVD (chapter 2.1.3), and FMD (chapter 2.1.1).

In response to this rule amendment, APHIS prepared a risk analysis to analyze the potential disease risks (in "APHIS Evaluation of the Status of Latvia Regarding Classical Swine Fever, Swine Vesicular Disease, and Foot and Mouth Disease" (USDA, APHIS, 2006)) and environmental effects associated with this action. This environmental assessment (EA) addresses potential environmental impacts related to the amendment of APHIS' regulations to include Latvia as a region of low risk for CSF and free of SVD and FMD.

This EA has been prepared to comply with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 United States Code (U.S.C.) 4321, *et. seq.*) as prescribed in implementing regulations adopted by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §§ 1500–1508), USDA's NEPA regulations (7 CFR part 1b), and APHIS' NEPA implementing procedures (7 CFR part 372). The Council on Environmental Quality NEPA implementing regulations require that environmental documents are made available to persons and agencies who may be interested or affected. The notice of availability of the EA was published in the Federal Register on February 12, 2007, within the notice of the proposed rule itself (72 FR 6490-6499) and provided for a 60-day

public comment period on the EA. The public comment period ended on April 13, 2007. No comments were received on the EA, and the EA was completed in June 2007.

II. Alternatives

The two alternatives considered in this EA include: (1) the no action alternative in which the current regulations would remain unchanged, continuing to omit Latvia from the list of regions considered as low risk for CSF, and free of SVD and FMD and, therefore, continuing to not allow the importation of swine and ruminant commodities from that region to the United States, and (2) the rule amendment of 9 CFR §§ 94.1, 94.9, 94.10, 94.11, 94.12, 94.13, 94.24, and 98.38, which would designate Latvia as low risk for CSF, and free of SVD and FMD and would, therefore, allow the importation of live swine and ruminants and swine and ruminant commodities from Latvia under certain conditions.

A. No Action

The no action alternative would leave the current importation regulations unchanged. Under this alternative, Latvia would continue to not be listed as a region of low risk for CSF and free of SVD and FMD and, therefore, would not be allowed to export swine and ruminant commodities to the United States. The status of Latvia as low risk for CSF and free of SVD and FMD is not reflected in the current import regulations. The continuance of such unsupported trade restrictions would be contrary to U.S. obligations under international trade agreements.

B. Rule Amendment

The rule amendment alternative would amend the current regulations to add Latvia to the definition of a European Union (EU) region that APHIS considers as low risk for CSF, and also add Latvia to the list of regions that are free of SVD and FMD. In doing so, this alternative would allow the importation of swine and ruminant commodities from Latvia if certain conditions are satisfied. The rule amendment would add Latvia to the list of EU Member States in 9 CFR §§ 93.500, 94.0, and 98.30 (EU-15)¹, and include it as one of the Member States in a region that APHIS considers as low risk for CSF under 9 CFR §§ 94.9 and 94.10 and therefore subject to the import conditions specified under 9 CFR §§ 94.24 and 98.38. The

¹ The original 15 Member States of the European Union include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, and the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, and Northern Ireland).

amendment also would add Latvia to the regions listed under 9 CFR §§ 94.1 as free of FMD but subject to the import conditions specified under 9 CFR §§ 94.11, and listed under 9 CFR §§ 94.12 as free of SVD but subject to the import conditions specified under 9 CFR §§ 94.13. Import conditions are necessary because, although APHIS has determined that region as being at low risk for CSF, and free of SVD and FMD, it shares common land borders and trades with regions that are not considered free of CSF, SVD, and FMD (see section III.C.1 of this document).

C. Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

Alternatives differing from those mentioned above were eliminated from consideration because changes in the requirements either would not mitigate the potential risk from the region or would place excessive restrictions on the imports that would serve as a *de facto* trade barrier. The certification requirements in the rule provide sufficient mitigation measures without being overly restrictive.

III. Potential Environmental Impacts

The diseases of concern with regard to allowing the importation of swine and ruminant commodities from Latvia are CSF, SVD, and FMD. APHIS prepared a risk analysis, “APHIS Evaluation of the Status of Latvia Regarding Classical Swine Fever, Swine Vesicular Disease, and Foot and Mouth Disease,” to evaluate the risk of CSF, SVD, and FMD introduction to U.S. animals from allowing these commodities from Latvia (USDA, APHIS, 2006). In preparing the risk analysis, APHIS evaluated the status of Latvia with regard to its infrastructure and control measures in place for these diseases, including an assessment of disease surveillance measures, import practices, laboratory capacity, emergency response procedures, and other factors that could influence the risk of disease introduction into the United States.

Latvia, as a new Member State of the EU in 2004, adopted the legislation of the European Commission (EC) regarding animal health, welfare, and identification including legislation pertaining to CSF, SVD, and FMD. Latvia also adopted the harmonized EC legislation regarding import, export, and trade of live animals, meat, and animal products. The region comprising the original 15 EU Member States is considered as low risk with respect to CSF. APHIS considers large portions of the EU to be free of SVD and FMD as well (USDA, APHIS, 2006).

Latvia shares a common land border with Russia, Belarus, Estonia, and Lithuania. The status of each of these regions with regard to CSF, SVD,

and FMD is as follows:

Russia – APHIS has not evaluated Russia for any swine disease. CSF outbreaks continue to occur here, and Russia vaccinates against CSF. SVD has never been reported here. Sporadic FMD outbreaks continue to occur and Russia vaccinates against FMD. Vaccination against CSF and FMD could potentially mask the presence of these diseases.

Belarus – APHIS has not evaluated Belarus for any swine disease. The last reported CSF outbreak occurred in August 1995, and Belarus maintains a CSF vaccination program in domestic swine, which again could potentially mask the presence of CSF. SVD has never been reported in Belarus. The last reported FMD outbreak occurred in 1982.

Estonia – The last reported CSF outbreak occurred in 1994. SVD has never been reported in the region. APHIS is currently evaluating this region for its disease status with regard to CSF and SVD. The last reported FMD outbreak occurred in 1982 and APHIS considers this region to be free of FMD.

Lithuania – The last reported CSF and FMD outbreaks occurred in 1992 and 1982, respectively. SVD has never been reported. APHIS is in the process of evaluating Lithuania as a region that is low risk for CSF and free of SVD and FMD.

A. Background

CSF is a highly contagious viral disease affecting swine and wild boar. The incubation period for CSF is 2 to 14 days. CSF is transmitted by direct contact from pig to pig; through ingestion of products, including fresh, frozen, or cured pork, that contain the virus; and by aerosols. CSF also can be introduced or spread by infected swine semen. Indirect contact with body secretions and excretions from infected animals (including dead animals) and viral contamination of objects may lead to mechanical transfer of the virus. Thus, movement of people, wild animals, and inanimate objects, such as trucks used to transport animals, may indirectly transmit the CSF virus. The CSF virus is hardy, being stable between pH 4 and 10 and also stable at low temperatures (thus, it is unlikely to be destroyed by the post-mortem decrease in muscle pH that accompanies carcass maturation), and is unlikely to be destroyed by transport or cold storage (USDA, APHIS, 2006).

SVD also is a highly contagious viral disease affecting swine and wild boar. The incubation period for SVD is 2 to 7 days. SVD may be introduced into a herd by infected animals or by feeding garbage

containing infected meat scraps. After the initial introduction, the disease spreads through contact of susceptible pigs with infected pigs and infected feces (such as from an improperly cleaned truck). The virus is hardy, resistant to pH changes between 2.5 and 12 (thus, it is unlikely to be destroyed by the post-mortem decrease in muscle pH that accompanies carcass maturation), and is very stable under cold conditions. The virus also is resistant to fermentation and smoking processes and may remain in hams for 180 days, sausages for more than 1 year, and processed intestinal casings for more than 2 years (OIE, 2005a, as cited in USDA, APHIS, 2006).

FMD is a contagious disease affecting cloven-hooved animals, including sheep, goats, cattle, and pigs, and well over 70 wildlife species, such as deer and wild boar. The incubation period for FMD is 2 to 14 days. Saliva, feces, urine, and breath are sources of the FMD virus, and the virus may be present in milk and semen up to 4 days before clinical signs appear (OIE, 2005, as cited in USDA, APHIS, 2006). The virus can be transmitted by direct or indirect contact with infected animals or an infected environment, such as movement of people, wild or domestic animals, or inanimate objects (such as vehicles, farm implements, and clothing). The virus can survive in meat and meat products in which the pH has remained above 6.0 and thus can be transmitted by infected meat and meat products, and through infected meat that has been discarded as garbage.

The potential for impacts on the human environment from the importation of swine and ruminant commodities from Latvia is dependent upon the ability of mitigative factors and mitigation measures to prevent the introduction of the diseases of concern via the biological pathways of transmission of the diseases. This section addresses the potential environmental impacts that could occur under the alternatives considered.

B. No Action

The no action alternative would not allow swine, ruminants, or swine and ruminant commodities to be imported from Latvia; the current rules governing the importation of these commodities would remain unchanged with regard to Latvia. This alternative would have no potential effect on U.S. animal health, public health, or the physical environment. This alternative, however, is inconsistent with the requirements of international trade agreements.

C. Rule Amendment

The rule amendment alternative would allow the importation of swine, ruminants, or swine or ruminant commodities from Latvia according to certain requirements that are designed to prevent the introduction of CSF, SVD, and FMD. Any potential for impacts to the human environment would be the result of exposure to the CSF, SVD, or FMD virus via a breakdown in the requirements that are designed to mitigate the risk of exposure of U.S. livestock to these viruses. Animal health, the physical environment, and public health are addressed in this document as components of the U.S. human environment that have the potential to be impacted in the event that the CSF, SVD, or FMD virus were to be introduced as a result of the rule amendment. Also, other environmental review considerations for the protection of the human environment are addressed in this section of the EA.

1. Animal Health

When allowing imports of live animals or animal products from other regions, the health of animals in the region of origin and the region's ability to prevent introduction of animal diseases is important in determining the risk to the health of U.S. animals. The animal health status of the exporting region was evaluated and the results reported in a risk analysis (USDA, APHIS, 2006). CSF was last reported in domestic swine in Latvia in April 1996, and no CSF cases in wild boar have been reported in recent years (USDA, APHIS, 2006). Following the 1996 CSF outbreak in domestic swine, a vaccination program against CSF in domestic swine occurred until 1998 and was carried out in wild boar from 1997-2001. Consequently, the potential exists to detect vaccine titers during CSF surveillance in wild boar and domestic swine (USDA, APHIS, 2006).

Latvia last reported an FMD outbreak in 1987. Since the last vaccination against FMD occurred well before vaccination was prohibited, the probability of a vaccine titer interfering with FMD surveillance is very low. Latvia has never reported SVD in either domestic swine or wild boar. Latvia now prohibits vaccination against CSF, SVD (although vaccination for this virus has never been used in this country), and FMD (USDA, APHIS, 2006).

The risk analysis (USDA, APHIS, 2006) assessed five main pathways,² identified in the release assessment discussion, by which the CSF, SVD, and/or FMD viruses could be introduced into Latvia from other EU Member States or affected third countries, thereby potentially resulting in risk to U.S. animals by allowing the importation of swine and ruminant

² (1) Natural movements of wild animals, (2) import and trade of live animals, (3) import and trade of animal products, (4) incoming vehicular and human traffic, and (5) agricultural commodities for personal consumption.

commodities from Latvia. The introduction of these diseases into Latvia by the identified pathways would only affect export risk to the United States if a susceptible domestic animal population became infected and this infection was not detected prior to export. Latvia has in place mitigating factors and mitigation measures, including requirements under EC legislation, that are designed to reduce the risk of disease introduction. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Imported products must originate from authorized third countries;
- Comprehensive certification requirements for imported swine and ruminant (for FMD purposes) commodities from third countries, including certification of disease status, and signature on the certificate by an official veterinarian of the country of origin are in place;
- A comprehensive and rigorous approval process for exporting establishments (including slaughter establishments and semen collection centers) is in place;
- Imported live animals must undergo a mandatory observation period and veterinary inspection prior to shipment and another veterinary inspection at the port of entry into the EU;
- Export or trade establishments must be approved; and
- Standard biosecurity measures are in place for disinfection of live-haul trucks and other vehicular traffic entering from neighboring third countries at a border inspection port with veterinary inspection and require disinfection of live-haul trucks after each transport.

The risk estimation concludes that the risk of infected live swine and ruminants, or commodities derived from these species, entering the United States from Latvia and exposing U.S. livestock is low (USDA, APHIS, 2006). This risk is further mitigated if Latvia is subject to the same requirements specified for other EU Member States in APHIS' regulations under 9 CFR 94.11 for meat and meat products from ruminants or swine, 94.13 and 94.24 for pork and pork products, 94.24 for breeding swine, and 98.38 for swine semen.³ The requirements specified in APHIS regulations are designed to prevent the introduction of CSF, SVD, or FMD into the United States from free or low-risk regions and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Official certification of the CSF-, SVD-, and/or FMD-free origin of swine, ruminants, and swine and ruminant commodities is required;
- Approval of exporting slaughtering establishments by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service is required and an official veterinarian of the exporting country must certify that this condition has been

³ In addition to Title 9, Code of Federal Regulations, the text of these requirements can be found in annex 1 appended to the APHIS risk analysis (USDA, APHIS, 2006).

met;

- The slaughtering establishment is not permitted to receive swine or ruminants, meat, or other animal products derived from swine or ruminants, which originated in a rinderpest- or FMD-infected region;
- The slaughtering establishment is not permitted to receive meat or other animal products from a rinderpest- or FMD-free region transported through a rinderpest- or FMD-infected region except in sealed containers;
- Meat and other animal products derived from swine or ruminants may not be commingled or otherwise come into contact with meat or other animals products which originated in a rinderpest- or FMD-infected region;
- Swine, pork, or pork products may not be commingled or otherwise come into contact with swine, pork, or pork products from CSF- or SVD-affected regions;
- Semen must originate from animals at an approved collection center; and
- Certain restrictions on the use of transportation equipment for live swine and movement of the commodities are in place.

APHIS considers the risk potential for introduction of CSF, SVD, or FMD from Latvia into the United States via export of swine, ruminants and swine and ruminant commodities to be low and the probability of exposure of susceptible U.S. livestock to these diseases via meat or meat products, live animals, or genetic material from Latvia to also be low. Applying mitigation measures for Latvia equivalent to those specified for other EU Member States in 9 CFR 94.11, 94.13, 94.24, and 98.38 would reduce the risk even further (USDA, APHIS, 2006).

If the proposed action were implemented and an incursion of CSF, SVD, or FMD were to occur in an area of Latvia, APHIS regulations would require the EU to prohibit for a specified period of time the exportation of swine commodities and, in the case of FMD, ruminants or ruminant commodities as well, from the affected area that could be effectively regionalized for disease status.⁴ For a CSF outbreak in domestic swine, restrictions would be lifted once the designation as a restricted zone is lifted by the competent veterinary authority of Latvia or 6 months following depopulation of the swine on the affected premises in the restricted zone and the cleaning and disinfection of the last affected premises in the zone, whichever is later. For a CSF outbreak in wild boar, restrictions would remain in place from the time of detection until the designation of the zone as a restricted zone is removed by the Member

⁴ Local Food and Veterinary Services offices are based in 26 districts and the City of Riga, Latvia. Each district office has effective oversight of normal animal movements into, out of, and within that jurisdiction. APHIS therefore considers that a district is the smallest administrative unit to which APHIS can effectively regionalize for animal disease status.



State's competent veterinary authority. For an outbreak of SVD or FMD, restrictions would remain in place until the restricted region was re-evaluated for disease-free status.

If CSF, SVD, or FMD were introduced into the United States, APHIS would take disease eradication measures, which could include quarantine and depopulation in areas where an effective barrier to the introduction of the disease can be established, surveillance of the area around an outbreak, and measures aimed at preventing any virus spread by swine or ruminant commodities, contaminated material, and vehicles. FMD could have more of an impact on U.S. animal health than CSF or SVD in that FMD could spread to other livestock species, such as cattle, sheep, and goats, and wildlife species, such as deer, elk, caribou, and bison.

2. Physical Environment

If the introduction of CSF, SVD, or FMD to U.S. swine were to occur, potential for impacts to the physical environment could occur in relation to disposal of carcasses due to death from disease and depopulation of infected animals or disposal of contaminated bedding and manure. Disposal methods could include rendering, burial, and incineration. If not handled properly, disposal of infected animals and materials could impact air, water, and soil quality and potentially could release the live CSF, SVD, or FMD virus into the environment. Factors influencing proper disposal methods include the volume of infected animals and contaminated materials, geographic features of the area (e.g., water resources and soil type), other physical environment considerations (such as weather and temperature), and available funds, equipment, and personnel.

Potential for impacts to the physical environment from the introduction of CSF, SVD, or FMD could occur in relation to the use of disinfectants to prevent the transfer of the CSF, SVD, or FMD virus from surfaces. As part of an eradication program, measures aimed at preventing spread of the CSF, SVD, or FMD virus, including disinfection of equipment, transport vehicles, and/or premises where infected swine or ruminants were maintained, would be required in order to prevent mechanical transfer of the virus. Disinfectants used for such purposes would have to be approved for the specific use with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and used according to registration requirements. Label instructions for disinfectants would be provided for their proper application to prevent potential environmental impacts associated with the use of the registered product.

3. Public Health

CSF, SVD, and FMD virus strains are host-specific, and, therefore, CSF, SVD, or FMD infections are not a public health issue (USDA, APHIS, 2006). The occurrence of the SVD virus in humans is rare; human infection has been reported in laboratory personnel working with the SVD

virus, and caution should be taken when working with infected material. CSF does not affect humans (The Center for Food Security & Public Health, 2005). FMD infection in humans, spread through contact with infected animals, is rare (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006).

As addressed in the risk analysis prepared for the proposed action, should a substantial foreign animal disease outbreak occur in the United States, it could result in psychological effects on farmers and farming communities. Farmers and their families could suffer psychologically from the loss of animals, including blood lines maintained over many generations; the loss of control over their business due to animal movement restrictions; disruptions in community life; and from stress over their financial future (USDA, APHIS, 2006).

4. Additional Environmental Review Considerations

a. Environmental Executive Orders

Some executive orders such as Executive Order 13045, Protection of Children From Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks, and Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, and departmental or agency directives require special environmental reviews in certain circumstances. In considering these additional review requirements, no circumstance that would trigger the need for special environmental reviews is involved in implementing the proposed action considered in this document. The rule amendment alternative presents no risk to the health or safety of children and will not result in disproportionately high and adverse human health and/or environmental effects on any minority populations and/or low-income populations in the United States.

b. Endangered Species Act

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and its implementing regulations require Federal agencies to ensure that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat. APHIS has considered the potential effects of the proposed action on endangered and threatened species and designated critical habitat. CSF and SVD are host specific, and there are no known federally listed or proposed endangered or threatened species in the United States that would be affected by CSF or SVD; therefore, the rule amendment will have no effect on endangered or threatened species in the United States or critical habitat. However, six endangered species are susceptible to FMD (see table 1).

Table 1. Endangered species in the United States susceptible to foot and mouth disease.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Critical Habitat	Listing Status
Woodland caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus caribou</i>	No	Endangered
Columbian white-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus leuceurus</i>	No	
Key deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus clavium</i>	No	
Sonoran pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana sonoriensis</i>	No	
Bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis</i>	Yes	
Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis californiana</i>	No	

APHIS conducted a risk analysis and determined that the risk of infected swine and ruminant commodities entering the United States from Latvia and exposing U.S. livestock to FMD is low (USDA, APHIS, 2006). This risk would be further mitigated by requiring implementation of the measures outlined in 9 CFR 94.11 that place restrictions on the importation of meat and other animal products derived from ruminants and swine that originate from regions which are free of FMD but share a common land border with regions designated as infected with FMD.

Based upon the effectiveness of the mitigation measures included in 9 CFR 94.11 and the low likelihood of exposure of U.S. livestock to FMD virus, implementation of the rulemaking is expected to have no effect on federally listed endangered species or designated critical habitat.

IV. Agencies or Persons Contacted

Environmental Services
 Policy and Program Development, APHIS, USDA
 4700 River Road, Unit 149
 Riverdale, MD 20737-1238

V. References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006. Foot-and-mouth disease. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/doc.do/id/0900f3ec8024f90b>.

The Center for Food Security and Public Health, 2005. Classical swine fever. College of Veterinary Medicine, Iowa State University. Ames, IA. Last updated August 2, 2005. Available at http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/classical_swine_fever.pdf. Accessed on 5/16/2006.

USDA, APHIS—See U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, 2006. APHIS evaluation of the status of Latvia regarding classical swine fever, swine vesicular disease, and foot and mouth disease. April 2006. Veterinary Services, National Center for Import and Export, Riverdale, MD.

**Finding of No Significant Impact
for the Environmental Assessment Prepared for the
Rule Amendment for the Importation of Live Swine and Ruminants and Swine and
Ruminant Commodities from Latvia**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) prepared an environmental assessment that analyzes the potential effects on the human environment from a rule amendment that would allow the importation of live swine and ruminants and swine and ruminant commodities from Latvia into the United States. The final environmental assessment entitled, "Rulemaking for Importation of Live Swine and Ruminants and Swine and Ruminant Commodities from Latvia," is available on the Internet through the web site at <http://www.regulations.gov/>. This Finding of No Significant Impact summarizes and incorporates by reference the final environmental assessment and concludes the environmental assessment process undertaken for the rule amendment.

Summary of the Environmental Assessment

The environmental assessment considered two alternatives: (1) "No Action," which would not change the current regulations and would continue to not allow the importation of live swine and ruminants and swine and ruminant commodities from Latvia and (2) the rule amendment alternative that would recognize Latvia as a low-risk region for classical swine fever (CSF), a region free of swine vesicular disease (SVD), and a region free of foot and mouth disease (FMD) and thereby allow, under certain conditions, the importation of live swine and ruminants and swine and ruminant commodities from Latvia to the United States.

The environmental assessment addressed the potential effects to the human environment from implementation of the rule amendment as follows.

A. Rule Amendment Effects on Animal Health

Implementation of the rule amendment will not have significant adverse impacts on U.S. animal health, providing that requirements in APHIS' regulations that serve to reduce the risk of disease introduction are followed. APHIS' evaluation of Latvia found that the country meets the requirements for being recognized as low risk for CSF and free of SVD and FMD. In its risk analysis, APHIS concluded that the risk of infected live swine and ruminants and swine and ruminant commodities entering the United States from Latvia and exposing U.S. swine and ruminants to disease is low. Requirements in APHIS' regulations¹ are designed to reduce the potential for disease introduction into the United States from low-risk regions.

¹ 9 CFR 94.11 for ruminant or swine meat or products; 94.13 and 94.25 for pork and pork products; 94.24 for live swine, pork, and pork products; 94.25 for breeding swine; and 98.38 for swine semen.

B. Rule Amendment Effects on the Physical Environment

The import restrictions specified in APHIS regulations are designed to reduce the potential for disease introduction into the United States from CSF low-risk regions that are listed in 9 CFR sections (§§) 94.9 and 94.10. This list of CSF low-risk regions will include Latvia upon implementation of the rule amendment. As well, Latvia is free of SVD and FMD and will be listed in 9 CFR § 94.12(a) as a region declared free of SVD and in 9 CFR § 94.1(a)(2) as a region declared free of FMD. Providing that APHIS requirements for the importation of live swine and ruminants and swine and ruminant products are followed, no significant adverse impacts on the physical environment are reasonably foreseeable from the rule amendment.

C. Rule Amendment Effects on Public Health

CSF virus does not affect humans. Although human infection from the SVD virus has been reported in laboratory settings, the World Health Organization does not consider SVD to be a threat to humans. As well, FMD infection in humans is rare. Because the animal diseases in question are not considered to be a threat to humans and because APHIS importation requirements are designed to prevent the introduction of the diseases to U.S. animals, no significant adverse impacts on public health are expected from implementation of the rule amendment.

D. Other Environmental Reviews Considered

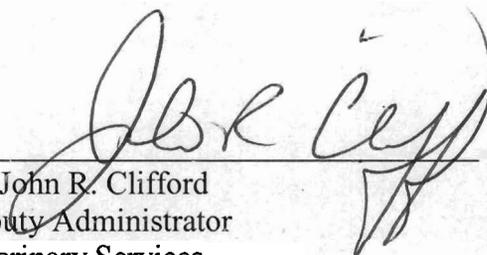
There are no circumstances involved in implementing the rule amendment that require special environmental reviews, such as through environmental executive orders.

However, as required under the Endangered Species Act, APHIS considered the potential effects of the rule amendment on federally listed endangered or threatened species and designated critical habitat. CSF and SVD virus strains are host-specific, affecting domestic and wild swine. There are no known federally listed or proposed endangered or threatened species in the United States that would be affected by CSF or SVD if either disease were to be introduced into the United States as a result of imported commodities. Although there are six endangered species in the United States that are susceptible to FMD, the risk analysis determined that the risk of infected swine and ruminant commodities entering the United States from Latvia and exposing U.S. swine and ruminants to FMD is low. Because this risk would be further mitigated by restrictions (9 CFR § 94.11) on the importation of meat and other animal products derived from ruminants and swine that originate from FMD-free regions that share a common land border with regions designated as infected with FMD, the rule amendment will have no effect on endangered or threatened species or critical habitat.

Finding

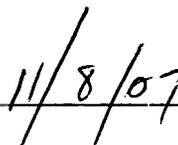
In reviewing the June 2007 environmental assessment along with the risk analysis prepared for the rule amendment to allow the importation of live swine and ruminants and swine and ruminant commodities from Latvia into the United States, I have determined that the rule amendment should not have any significant adverse impacts on the human environment. Accordingly, I have determined that this Finding of No Significant Impact is the appropriate environmental decision to make in reference to the final environmental assessment for the rule amendment. Because this Finding of No Significant Impact has been made, the preparation of an environmental impact statement will not be necessary before implementing the rule amendment.

APHIS will implement the rule amendment because this alternative will continue to further protect against the introduction of CSF, SVD, and FMD in the United States while removing unnecessary prohibitions on certain low risk commodities in accordance with international guidelines.



Dr. John B. Clifford
Deputy Administrator
Veterinary Services
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Date



11/8/07