

Proposed Rules

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains notices to the public of the proposed issuance of rules and regulations. The purpose of these notices is to give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rule making prior to the adoption of the final rules.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Telephone Bank

7 CFR Part 1610

Rural Utilities Service

7 CFR Part 1744

Review and Revision of Rural Utilities Service Telecommunications Program and the Rural Telephone Bank Loan Documents

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service and Rural Telephone Bank, USDA.

ACTION: Advance notice of proposed rulemaking.

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and Rural Telephone Bank (RTB) are working on a project to update the form and content of the mortgages and loan documents relating to telecommunications borrowers. This project is part of the continuing effort to streamline and simplify regulations and to reduce burdens on borrowers. Suggestions are invited on these documents.

DATES: Comments must be received by RUS or carry a postmark or equivalent by September 17, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be addressed to F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Director, Program Development And Regulatory Analysis, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-1522. RUS requires a signed original and 3 copies of all comments (7 CFR 1700.4).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service, Room 4034 South Bldg., 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-1522.

Telephone: 202-720-0736. FAX: 202-720-4120. E-mail: fheppe@rus.usda.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: As part of their continuing effort to streamline and simplify regulations and to reduce

burdens on borrowers, the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and Rural Telephone Bank (RTB) intend to revise and reform their loan contract and mortgage documents. The reform initiative will have the following objectives:

1. Preserve and enhance RUS loan security;
2. Provide borrower flexibility into the 21st Century;
3. Improve RUS response to a rapidly changing competitive and regulatory environment;
4. Streamline RUS controls and approvals;
5. Minimize the differences between RUS loan documents for cooperatives and commercial entities;
6. Improve the ability of borrowers to respond to a changing marketplace;
7. Reduce RUS processing delays and speed the release of funds;
8. Improve the use of the Automated Legal Practice System (ALPS) which prepares most loan documents;
9. Where feasible and prudent, conform lending criteria with that of private financial institutions;
10. Avoid the traditional principle of "one size fits all."

Comments are invited on this project, especially on the above objectives. Target for completion and publication is early November. Consequently, we have selected a relatively short period for receipt of comments.

Dated: August 11, 1998.

Wally Beyer,

Administrator, Rural Utilities Service and Governor, Rural Telephone Bank.

[FR Doc. 98-22022 Filed 8-17-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

9 CFR Parts 93 and 98

[Docket No. 97-014-2]

Canadian Border Ports; Champlain, NY, and Derby Line, VT

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed rule; withdrawal.

SUMMARY: We are withdrawing a proposed rule that would have amended

the animal and animal product importation regulations by removing Champlain, NY, and Derby Line, VT, as land border ports of entry for animals and animal germ plasm imported from Canada into the United States. We had proposed this action in an effort to increase efficiency in our animal and animal germ plasm inspection program along the U.S.-Canada border. We are withdrawing the proposed rule because of ongoing communications with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency regarding possible sharing of animal inspection resources along the U.S.-Canada border.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Gary Colgrove, Chief Staff Veterinarian, Import/Export Animals, National Center for Import and Export, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 39, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231, (301) 734-3276.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On June 27, 1997, we published in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 34677-34679, Docket No. 97-014-1) a proposed rule to amend the regulations at 9 CFR parts 93¹ and 98, which govern the importation of animals and animal products, to remove Champlain, NY, and Derby Line, VT, from the lists of border ports along the U.S.-Canada border having inspection facilities for the importation of animals and animal germ plasm. The ports of Champlain, NY, and Derby Line, VT, are listed in parts 93 and 98 as ports of entry for the importation of many animals, including poultry, horses, swine, cattle, and other ruminants, and certain animal germ plasm. The animal importation facilities at these two ports are open on a part-time basis only. Following a review of the amount of animal and animal germ plasm inspections performed annually at all of the Canadian border ports in the Northeast, we were considering closing the animal importation facilities at Champlain and Derby Line to increase efficiency in our inspection program.

We solicited comments on the proposed rule for 60 days ending

¹ The proposed rule actually discussed amending parts 92 and 98 instead of parts 93 and 98. The provisions of part 92, "Importation of Certain Animals, Birds, and Poultry, and Certain Animal, Bird, and Poultry Products; Requirements for Means of Conveyance and Shipping Containers," were moved to part 93 in a final rule published October 28, 1997 (62 FR 56000-56026, Docket No. 94-106-9), and effective November 28, 1997.

August 26, 1997. We received six comments by that date. The comments were from a Canadian livestock producer, an organization representing the U.S. equine industry, a State Government official, a Canadian Government official, a U.S. senator, and a commenter who did not identify a particular affiliation. Five of the comments opposed closing the animal importation facilities at Derby Line, and two opposed closing the facilities at Champlain. The most common concern expressed in the comments was that, by closing either or both of these ports for animal inspection purposes, exporters and importers would have to transport their animals greater distances than is currently required, and additional travel time translates into higher transportation costs.

Since publication of the proposed rule of June 27, 1997, referenced above, our agency has become engaged in discussions with officials of the Animal Health Division of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency regarding the possibility of sharing animal inspection resources along the U.S.-Canada border. Because these discussions are ongoing, we believe that it would be premature to make the proposed changes to our animal and animal germ plasm inspection program along the U.S.-Canada border at this time. Accordingly, we have decided to withdraw the proposed rule. If, following the conclusion of our communications with Canadian animal health officials, we believe that it would be prudent to close the animal inspection facilities at any of the ports along the U.S.-Canada border, we will propose such changes in the **Federal Register** for public comment.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1622; 19 U.S.C. 1306; 21 U.S.C. 103-105, 111, 134a, 134b, 134c, 134d, 134f, 136, and 136a; 31 U.S.C. 9701; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.2(d).

Done in Washington, DC, this 10th day of August, 1998.

Joan M. Arnoldi,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 98-22181 Filed 8-17-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

FARM CREDIT ADMINISTRATION

12 CFR Ch. VI

Statement on Regulatory Burden

AGENCY: Farm Credit Administration.

ACTION: Notice of intent; request for comment.

SUMMARY: The Farm Credit Administration (FCA or Agency),

through the FCA Board, is requesting commenters to identify regulations and policies that duplicate other requirements, are ineffective, or impose burdens that are greater than the benefits received. This action is being taken to improve the regulatory framework within which the Farm Credit System (FCS or System) operates.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before November 20, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be mailed or delivered to Patricia W. DiMuzio, Director, Regulation and Policy Division, Office of Policy and Analysis, Farm Credit Administration, 1501 Farm Credit Drive, McLean, Virginia 22102-5090 or sent by facsimile transmission to (703) 734-5784. Comments may also be submitted via electronic mail to "reg-comm@fca.gov" or through the Pending Regulations section of the FCA's interactive website at "www.fca.gov." Copies of all communications received will be available for review by interested parties in the Office of Policy and Analysis, Farm Credit Administration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

S. Robert Coleman, Senior Policy Analyst, Regulation and Policy Division, Office of Policy and Analysis, Farm Credit Administration, McLean, VA 22102-5090, (703) 883-4498,

or

Richard A. Katz, Senior Attorney, Regulatory Enforcement Division, Office of General Counsel, Farm Credit Administration, McLean, VA 22102-5090, (703) 883-4020, TDD (703) 883-4444.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FCA is the independent Federal agency in the executive branch of the government responsible for regulating FCS institutions. As a Government-sponsored enterprise, the FCS primarily provides loans to farmers, ranchers, aquatic producers and harvesters, agricultural cooperatives, and rural utilities.

The FCA is committed to continually updating its regulations and policies so they remain useful to the FCS and the public without sacrificing safety and soundness. Our efforts to reduce regulatory burdens on FCS institutions are consistent with the National Performance Review (NPR), which seeks to eliminate regulations that unnecessarily impede the ability of businesses to compete efficiently in the marketplace. Although independent Federal agencies are not required to comply with the NPR, the FCA

voluntarily participates in this program because FCA subscribes to its primary objectives.

This initiative is designed to meet the needs of the System for effective regulation as agricultural credit markets continually change. Our efforts to remove unnecessary regulatory requirements on the System began in 1993 when we initiated a project seeking comments on regulatory burden. See 58 FR 34003 (June 23, 1993). Many regulatory requirements have been eliminated or streamlined during the past 5 years in response to the above-referenced 1993 publication. More specifically, a rulemaking project in 1995 repealed several regulations that prescribed unnecessarily detailed managerial or operational practices at FCS institutions, or required System institutions to obtain FCA approval before they engaged in certain activities. See 60 FR 2552 (January 10, 1995); 60 FR 20008 (April 24, 1995). On November 24, 1995, the FCA published a notice in the **Federal Register** that informed the public of those regulations that the FCA decided to retain without amendment because they were determined necessary to implement the Farm Credit Act of 1971, as amended (Act), or to protect the safety and soundness of the System. See 60 FR 57913. Another rulemaking made technical corrections by: (1) Repealing other FCA prior-approval requirements; (2) conforming several regulations to recent statutory amendments; and (3) abolishing other burdensome regulatory requirements. See 61 FR 67181 (December 20, 1996). Additionally, the FCA responded to comments about regulatory burden by amending many regulations and policies, including:

- Related Services. See 60 FR 34090 (June 30, 1995);
- Ten-Day Notification Requirements for Changes in Interest Rates. See 61 FR 11303 (March 20, 1996);
- Capital Adequacy and Customer Eligibility. See 62 FR 4429 (January 30, 1997);
- Quarterly Reports to Shareholders. See 62 FR 15089 (March 31, 1997);
- Loan Underwriting Standards. See 62 FR 51007 (September 30, 1997); and,
- General Financing Agreements. See 63 FR 5721 (February 4, 1998).

In its continuing effort to update its regulations and policies, the FCA is soliciting comments from the public as to any of its regulations and policies that may duplicate other governmental requirements, are not effective in achieving stated objectives, or create a burden that is perceived to be greater than the benefits received. Although the Agency will strive to minimize