

than \$5,000,000, excluding receipts from any other sources. No more than 7 handlers, and a majority of producers, of California raisins may be classified as small entities.

This final rule changes the reporting requirements specified in paragraphs (b) and (c) of § 989.173 regarding the receipt and disposition, respectively, of raisins produced from grapes grown outside the State of California. Handlers will no longer have to report to the Committee whether such raisins were received as natural condition or packed raisins, nor will handlers have to report whether such raisins were disposed of in cartons, bags or as bulk raisins. Handlers will have to report additional information, specifically, the area of origin (country or state) of such raisins on their disposition reports. Authority for these changes is provided in § 989.73(d) of the order.

Regarding the impact of this action on affected entities, this action will reduce, in the aggregate, the reporting and recordkeeping burden on handlers who receive and dispose of non-California raisins. The Committee estimates that 11 handlers receive and dispose of non-California raisins each year. It is estimated that it will take each handler about 4 minutes to complete each revised receipt report (1 minute less than that required for the current receipt report). The total annual burden for such receipt reports will be reduced from 11 hours to about 8.8 hours. Furthermore, it is estimated that it will take each handler about 5 minutes to complete each revised disposition report (the same as required for the current disposition report). The total annual burden for such disposition reports will remain at about 11 hours.

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35), the information collection requirements contained in this final rule have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget. Existing requirements have been assigned OMB No. 0581-0178. As with other similar marketing order programs, reports and forms are periodically reviewed to reduce information requirements and duplication by industry and public sector agencies. Finally, the Department has not identified any relevant Federal rules that duplicate, overlap or conflict with this rule.

An alternative to this action would be to not make the recommended reporting changes. However, the Committee determined that it was best to proceed with its recommendation to reduce the reporting burden on handlers and obtain better information on tracking non-California raisins.

In addition, the Committee held an Administrative Issues Subcommittee meeting on November 9, 1999, where this issue was deliberated. This meeting and the Committee's meeting on November 10, 1999, were public meetings widely publicized throughout the raisin industry. All interested persons were invited to attend the meetings and participate in the industry's deliberations.

A proposed rule concerning this action was published in the **Federal Register** on December 10, 1999 (64 FR 69204). Copies of the rule were mailed by the Committee staff to all Committee members and alternates, the Raisin Bargaining Association, handlers, and dehydrators. In addition, the rule was made available through the Internet by the Office of the Federal Register. That rule provided for a 60-day comment period which ended February 8, 2000. No comments were received.

A small business guide on complying with fruit, vegetable, and specialty crop marketing agreements and orders may be viewed at the following web site: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/moab.html>. Any questions about the compliance guide should be sent to Jay Guerber at the previously mentioned address in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section.

After consideration of all relevant matter presented, including the information and recommendation submitted by the Committee and other available information, it is hereby found that this rule, as hereinafter set forth, will tend to effectuate the declared policy of the Act.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 989

Grapes, Marketing agreements, Raisins, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 989 is amended as follows:

PART 989—RAISINS PRODUCED FROM GRAPES GROWN IN CALIFORNIA

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 989 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601-674.

2. In § 989.173, the second sentence in paragraph (b)(7) and paragraph (c)(3)(iv) are revised to read as follows:

§ 989.173 Reports.

* * * * *

(b) * * *

(7) * * * This report shall include:

The varietal type of raisins received; the net weight (pounds) of raisins received for the current month as well as a

cumulative quantity from August 1; and the state or country where the raisins were produced. * * *

(c) * * *

(3) * * *

(iv) The area of origin (state or country) of the raisins shipped.

* * * * *

Dated: March 16, 2000.

Robert C. Keeney,

Deputy Administrator, Fruit and Vegetable Programs.

[FR Doc. 00-7084 Filed 3-21-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

9 CFR Parts 74 and 93

[Docket No. 00-016-1]

Importation and Interstate Movement of Certain Land Tortoises

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim rule and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are prohibiting, until further notice, the importation into the United States of certain land tortoises. We are also prohibiting, until further notice, the interstate movement of these land tortoises. These actions are necessary to prevent the introduction and spread of exotic ticks known to be vectors of heartwater disease, an acute infectious disease of ruminants. These actions will provide protection against an outbreak of heartwater disease in domestic and wild populations of ruminants in the United States.

DATES: This interim rule is effective March 22, 2000. However, this rule does not apply to importations that are en route to the United States. We invite you to comment on this docket. We will consider all comments that we receive by May 22, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Please send your comment and three copies to: Docket No. 00-016-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Suite 3C03, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238.

Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 00-016-1.

You may read any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading

room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register**, and related information, including the names of organizations and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, are available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. D. D. Wilson, Senior Staff Entomologist, Emergency Programs, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 41, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231; (301) 734-8073.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The regulations in 9 CFR part 93 (referred to below as the animal import regulations) prohibit or restrict the importation of certain animals and birds into the United States to prevent the introduction of communicable diseases of livestock and poultry. The regulations in 9 CFR chapter I, subchapter C (referred to below as the interstate movement regulations), prohibit or restrict the interstate movement of certain animals and birds to prevent the spread of communicable diseases of livestock and poultry within the United States.

We are amending the animal import regulations to prohibit, until further notice, the importation of the following tortoises into the United States: All species and subspecies of leopard tortoise (*Geochelone pardalis*), African spurred tortoise (*Geochelone sulcata*), and Bell's hingeback tortoise (*Kinixys belliana*). Tortoises that are en route to the United States at the time of the publication of this interim rule will be allowed to be imported for humanitarian reasons. Refusing entry of tortoises already en route to the United States upon publication of the rule would be detrimental to the health of the tortoises and could be fatal.

In addition, we are amending the interstate movement regulations to prohibit, until further notice, the interstate movement of all species and subspecies of these land tortoises.

These actions are necessary because these tortoises, which are regularly imported into the United States and are common in the U.S. pet trade, have been found to harbor the tropical bont tick (*Amblyomma variegatum*), the African tortoise tick (*Amblyomma marmoreum*), and ticks of the species *Amblyomma sparsum*. All of these exotic ticks are known to be vectors of heartwater

disease. Heartwater disease is an acute infectious disease of ruminants, including cattle, sheep, goats, white-tailed deer, and antelope. This disease has a 60 percent or greater mortality rate in livestock and a 90 percent or greater mortality rate in white-tailed deer.

In December 1999, it was reported that evidence indicating the presence of nucleic acid from the causative agent of heartwater disease or a related agent might have been present in *Amblyomma sparsum* collected from leopard tortoises imported into Florida. Subsequently, in February 2000, leopard tortoises from premises known to be infested with the African tortoise tick were moved interstate to noninfested premises. Though these incidents involve only leopard tortoises, we are also prohibiting the importation and interstate movement of African spurred tortoise and Bell's hingeback tortoise because interception records from 1995-1999 report that 90 percent of the tropical bont ticks, African tortoise ticks, and ticks of the species *Amblyomma sparsum* found on reptiles entering the United States occurred on these three species of land tortoise.

We are working to establish effective treatment and biosecurity protocols for tortoises and other reptiles. Effective treatment and biosecurity protocols will allow us to ensure that all tortoises and other reptiles entering the United States, as well as tortoises and other reptiles already in the United States, can be effectively treated for exotic ticks and that all exotic ticks can be eradicated from infested premises. When we have established such protocols, and when tortoises and other reptiles already in the United States have been effectively treated for exotic ticks and all exotic ticks eradicated from infested premises, the ban on importation of these tortoises from Africa, as well as the ban on interstate movement of these tortoises, will be lifted. Until that time, however, these actions will provide protection against an outbreak of heartwater disease in domestic and wild populations of ruminants in the United States.

Emergency Action

The Administrator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has determined that an emergency exists that warrants publication of this interim rule without prior opportunity for public comment. Immediate action is necessary to prevent an outbreak of heartwater disease in the United States.

Because prior notice and other public procedures with respect to this action are impracticable and contrary to the public interest under these conditions,

we find good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553 to make this action effective less than 30 days after publication. We will consider comments that are received within 60 days of publication of this rule in the **Federal Register**. After the comment period closes, we will publish another document in the **Federal Register**. The document will include a discussion of any comments we receive and any amendments we are making to the rule as a result of the comments.

Executive Order 12866 and Regulatory Flexibility Act

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12866. The rule has been determined to be not significant for the purposes of Executive Order 12866 and, therefore, has not been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget.

This emergency situation makes timely compliance with section 604 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) impracticable. We are currently assessing the potential economic effects of this action on small entities. Based on that assessment, we will either certify that the rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities or publish a final regulatory flexibility analysis.

Executive Order 12372

This program/activity is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.025 and is subject to Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. (See 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V.)

Executive Order 12988

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform.

This rule: (1) Preempts all State and local laws and regulations that are inconsistent with this rule; (2) Has no retroactive effect; and (3) Does not require administrative proceedings before parties may file suit in court challenging this rule.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This interim rule contains no information collection or recordkeeping requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*).

List of Subjects

9 CFR Part 74

Animal diseases, Livestock, Quarantine, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Transportation.

9 CFR Part 93

Animal diseases, Imports, Livestock, Poultry and poultry products, Quarantine, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Accordingly, we are amending 9 CFR chapter I as follows:

1. In subchapter C, a new part 74 is added to read as follows:

PART 74—PROHIBITION OF INTERSTATE MOVEMENT OF LAND TORTOISES

Sec.

74.1 General prohibition.

Authority: 21 U.S.C. 111–113, 114a, 115, 117, 120, 122–126, 134b, 134f; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.2(d).

§ 74.1 General prohibition.

The interstate movement of leopard tortoise (*Geochelone pardalis*), African spurred tortoise (*Geochelone sulcata*), and Bell's hingeback tortoise (*Kinixys belliana*) is prohibited.

PART 93—IMPORTATION OF CERTAIN ANIMALS, BIRDS, AND POULTRY, AND CERTAIN ANIMAL, BIRD, AND POULTRY PRODUCTS; REQUIREMENTS FOR MEANS OF CONVEYANCE AND SHIPPING CONTAINERS

2. The authority citation for part 93 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1622; 19 U.S.C. 1306; 21 U.S.C. 102–105, 111, 114a, 134a, 134b, 134c, 134d, 134f, 136, and 136a; 31 U.S.C. 9701; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.2(d).

3. In § 93.701, a new paragraph (c) is added to read as follows:

§ 93.701 Prohibitions.

* * * * *

(c) No person may import leopard tortoise (*Geochelone pardalis*), African spurred tortoise (*Geochelone sulcata*), or Bell's hingeback tortoise (*Kinixys belliana*) into the United States.

Done in Washington, DC, this 16th day of March 2000.

Bobby R. Acord,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 00–7014 Filed 3–21–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–U

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

10 CFR Part 820

Procedural Rules for DOE Nuclear Activities; General Statement of Enforcement Policy

AGENCY: Department of Energy.

ACTION: Final rule; amendment of enforcement policy statement and confirmation of interim rule.

SUMMARY: The Department of Energy (DOE) is amending its General Statement of Enforcement Policy, which is in an Appendix to the Procedural Rules for DOE Nuclear Activities, to state that DOE may use information collected by DOE and the Department of Labor (DOL) concerning whistleblower proceedings as a basis for enforcement actions and civil penalties under the Procedural Rules for DOE Nuclear Activities if the retaliation against DOE contractor employees relates to matters of nuclear safety in connection with a DOE nuclear activity. DOE also confirms the interim amendments to the enforcement policy statement published October 8, 1997.

DATES: This amended Policy and confirmation of the interim rule published October 8, 1997 as final takes effect on April 21, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Keith Christopher, U. S. Department of Energy, Office of Investigation and Enforcement, EH–10, 19901 Germantown Road, Germantown, MD 20874 (301) 903–0100.

Ben McRae, U. S. Department of Energy, Office of General Counsel, GC–52, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585 (202) 586–6975.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

- I. Background
- II. Basis for Amendment of Enforcement Policy
- III. Procedural Requirements
 - A. Review Under Executive Order 12866
 - B. Review Under the Regulatory Flexibility Act
 - C. Review Under the Paperwork Reduction Act
 - D. Review Under the National Environmental Policy Act
 - E. Review Under Executive Order 13132
 - F. Review Under Executive Order 12988
 - G. Review Under the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995
 - H. Congressional Notification

I. Background

The Department of Energy (DOE) has adopted procedural rules in 10 CFR part 820 (Part 820) to provide for the enforcement of violations of DOE Nuclear Safety Requirements for which civil and criminal penalties can be imposed under the Price-Anderson Amendments Act of 1988 (Pub. L. 100–408, August 20, 1988) (PAAA). 56 FR 64290 (proposed Dec. 9, 1991), 58 FR 43680 (final Aug. 17, 1993). Appended to the rule is a General Statement of Enforcement Policy (Enforcement

Policy). The Enforcement Policy sets forth the general framework through which DOE would seek to enforce compliance with DOE's nuclear safety rules, regulations and orders by a DOE contractor, subcontractor, or a supplier (hereinafter referred to collectively as "contractor"). Following that promulgation, DOE amended the Enforcement Policy with an opportunity for comment. 62 FR 52479 (Oct. 8, 1997). No comments were received and the amendments are made final today.

DOE's whistleblower regulations, 10 CFR part 708 (Department of Energy Contractor Employee Protection Program) (Part 708), establish requirements prohibiting retaliation against DOE contractor employees who have undertaken certain whistleblower actions. DOE's Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) has responsibility for resolution of whistleblower complaints under Part 708. The regulations provide criteria and procedures to protect employees of DOE contractors who believe they have suffered retaliation for disclosing information concerning danger to public health or safety, substantial violations of law, fraud or gross mismanagement; for participating in congressional proceedings; or for refusing to participate in dangerous activities. If an act of retaliation has occurred, OHA may order reinstatement, transfer preference, back pay, reimbursements of costs and expenses, or other remedies necessary to abate the violation. 10 CFR part 708, 57 FR 7533 (final March 3, 1992), 61 FR 55230 (notice Oct. 25, 1996), 64 FR 12862 (interim final March 15, 1999), 64 FR 37396 (interim final rule and amendment July 12, 1999), 65 FR 6314 (final Feb. 9, 2000), 65 FR 9201 (correction Feb. 24, 2000).

In late 1992, Congress amended the Energy Reorganization Act, 42 U.S.C. 5801, *et seq.* (ERA), to prohibit any employer, including a DOE contractor indemnified under section 170.d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2011, *et seq.* (AEA), from discriminating against any employee with respect to his or her compensation, terms, conditions or privileges of employment because the employee assisted or participated, or is about to assist or participate in any manner, in any action to carry out the purposes of the ERA or the AEA. 42 U.S.C. 5851 (ERA Sec. 211). The Department of Labor (DOL) has the responsibility under Sec. 211 to investigate employee complaints of discrimination and may, after an investigation and opportunity for hearing, order a violator to take affirmative action to abate the violation, reinstate the complainant to his or her