

# VETERINARY CALL



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## Health certificates — providing protection

*Thousands of cattle are transported each day in the United States. Many of these cattle require a certificate of veterinary inspection, also known as a health certificate, in order to cross between states and, in some situations, even when traveling within a state.*

Health certificates are official documents issued by an accredited veterinarian certifying the animals identified on the document have been inspected and satisfy the regulations associated with their intended movement.

The various state agencies charged with protecting animal and human health have created rules and regulations concerning the movement of cattle into their states. These regulations are in place to help protect animals, people and ecosystems by providing barriers to the spread of diseases, pests and invasive species.

While there are many similarities in the import requirements for each state, there are important differences as well. Therefore, it is important for the veterinarian writing the health certificate to contact the state where the cattle are destined to ensure all requirements are met before they are transported.

### What's on a health certificate?

Depending on where the cattle originated, their age, sex and purpose for transport, the animals may only require a visual inspection. However they may also

require certain tests, treatments, vaccinations or other procedures before they qualify for inclusion on a health certificate.

The information that must be included on a health certificate includes: 1) the name and address of the owner at the time of movement, as well as the location from which the animals have been moved, 2) the date the cattle are inspected and the certificate is created, 3) the number of cattle being moved and destination of the animals, 4) the purpose for which the animals are being moved, and, 5) depending on the age and purpose for the movement, the cattle may need to be individually identified and the dates and results of certain tests provided. In general, cattle intended for breeding and cattle going to shows or exhibitions have more requirements for movement than cattle intended for feeding or slaughter.

For more than 10 years, health certificates have been electronic rather than written on paper. The advantages of this pertain to legibility, as they can be located and searched more easily than ones retrieved by hand. They are easier to

share between all interested parties, including the person shipping the cattle, the person receiving the cattle and the veterinarians involved in the movement. In the event of a disease outbreak, electronic health certificates also allow for a more rapid response by state and federal animal health officials.

While obtaining health certificates and ensuring that cattle intended for movement meet all the requirements for their destination can be inconvenient, the examinations, testing and documentation required to obtain health certificates provide all producers and herds significant protection from important cattle diseases.

Because health requirements are not the same for every state and for every age and type of cattle, it is important that producers work with their veterinarian well ahead of transport to ensure all the information needed for the health certificate is accurately gathered.

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