



United States Department of Agriculture

**Animal and Plant
Health Inspection Service**
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Stakeholder Announcement

Updates to APHIS' Website Involving Animal Welfare Act and Horse Protection Act Compliance Information

Editor's Note (Revised Feb. 7, 2017) The review of APHIS' website has been ongoing, and the agency is striving to balance the need for transparency with rules protecting individual privacy. In 2016, well before the change of Administration, APHIS decided to make adjustments to the posting of regulatory records. In addition, APHIS is currently involved in litigation concerning, among other issues, information posted on the agency's website. While the agency is vigorously defending against this litigation, in an abundance of caution, the agency is taking additional measures to protect individual privacy. These decisions are not final. Adjustments may be made regarding information appropriate for release and posting.

For more than a decade, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has shared information on its website concerning its administration of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and Horse Protection Act (HPA). This information includes inspection reports, research facility annual reports, and lists of persons licensed and registered under the AWA, as well as lists of persons licensed by USDA-certified horse industry organizations and associations (HIOs) to inspect horses for compliance with the HPA. More recently, APHIS also began posting AWA and HPA regulatory correspondence and enforcement-related information to its website for the general public to view.

APHIS, during the past year, has conducted a comprehensive review of the information it posts on its website for the general public to view. As a result of the comprehensive review, APHIS has implemented actions to remove certain personal information from documents it posts on APHIS' website involving the Horse Protection Act and the Animal Welfare Act. Going forward, APHIS will remove from its website inspection reports, regulatory correspondence, research facility annual reports, and enforcement records that have not received final adjudication. APHIS will also review and redact, as necessary, the lists of licensees and registrants under the AWA, as well as lists of designated qualified persons (DQPs) licensed by USDA-certified horse industry organizations.

Those seeking information from APHIS regarding inspection reports, regulatory correspondence, and enforcement records should submit Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for that information. Records will be released when authorized and in a manner consistent with the FOIA and Privacy Act. If the same records are frequently requested via the FOIA process, in most instances APHIS may post the appropriately redacted versions to its website. In addition, some enforcement records (such as initial decision and orders, default decisions, and consent decisions) will continue to be available on the USDA's Office of Administrative Law Judge's website (<https://www.oaljdecisions.dm.usda.gov/>)

— [Questions and Answers](#)

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