

April 1, 1994

VETERINARY SERVICES NOTICE

Subject: Importation of Brushtail Opossums (Possums)
(Trichosurus vulpecula) and Hedgehogs from New Zealand

To: Directors, VS Regions
Deputy Administrator, PPQ
Area Veterinarians in Charge, VS

This Notice is to inform you that Brushtail possums (Trichosurus vulpecula) and hedgehogs from New Zealand will be refused entry because of the significant risk of these animals being infected with Mycobacterium bovis.

M. bovis is the causal agent of tuberculosis (TB) in cattle, bison, and most mammals, including man. TB is endemic in the Brushtail possums from New Zealand. These possums are a constant source of disease for the domestic livestock population of New Zealand. A recent risk assessment indicates a high percentage of lots of imported Brushtail possums would contain one or more animals infected with M. bovis.

Because hedgehogs occupy the same habitat and geographical areas as the Brushtail possums, there is a considerable risk of importing TB-infected hedgehogs as well. Therefore, APHIS will not issue any import permits for hedgehogs originating in New Zealand.

APHIS personnel should prohibit the entry of any of these animals found at a port of entry. If the importer does not voluntarily remove the animals from the country, a request for a disposal order should be forwarded through the appropriate channels to this office. This action is being taken under authority of 21 USC 111 because of the threat these animals pose to the livestock industry.

Please notify all port veterinarians, Plant Protection and Quarantine and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel, brokers, and other interested parties.

/s/

Donald W. Luchsinger
Acting Deputy Administrator
Veterinary Services

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