

category, the Committee recommended increasing the minimum diameter from 1½ inches to 1¾ inches, and the maximum diameter from 2½ inches to 2¾ inches for all onions except white or red varieties produced and handled in the production area. Yellow onions are the major group produced in the regulated production area.

This proposed rule would modify a marketing order size category that is recognized by the onion industry as "repacker" or "prepacker" size onions. Onions in this size category are generally packed and shipped in 50-pound sacks for later repacking into various consumer packs.

The U.S. Standards for Grades of Onions were recently amended to include a classification for "repacker/prepacker" size onions (60 FR 46976, September 8, 1995), effective October 10, 1995. Section 51.2836 of the U.S. Standards defines such onions as those ranging from a minimum diameter of 1¾ inches to a maximum diameter of 3 inches. The U.S. Standards also specify that not more than 5 percent of the onions in a lot may be undersized and that not more than 10 percent may be oversized.

Recent trends in buyer preference reflect an increasing demand for larger size onions in the "repacker/prepacker" category. The Committee reports that the current maximum diameter of 2½ inches for this size category is too restrictive and has resulted in a high percentage of onions being packed in a different category due to oversize. This has resulted in fewer "repacker/prepacker" size onions being available for market. With an increase in the maximum allowable diameter to 2¾ inches for "repacker/prepacker" size onions, the Committee expects the quantity of such onions available for market to increase. The Committee recommended an increase to 2¾ inches rather than 3 inches, the upper limit of the size range specified in the U.S. Standards, because the smaller size is more suitable for this industry and its customers. In addition to the proposed increase in the maximum diameter for onions in this category, the Committee recommended that the minimum diameter be increased from 1½ inches to 1¾ inches to be the same as the recently amended U.S. Standards.

Any costs to handlers and producers attributable to this proposed regulation, if adopted, are expected to be offset by the benefits derived from improved returns. The proposed modification would increase the volume of onions marketed in this size category, and is expected to result in higher returns for producers and handlers.

Section 8e of the Act requires that when certain domestically produced commodities, including onions, are regulated under a Federal marketing order, imports of that commodity must meet the same or comparable grade, size, quality, or maturity requirements. Section 8e also provides that whenever two or more marketing orders regulating the same commodity produced in different areas of the United States are concurrently in effect, the Secretary shall determine which of the areas produces the commodity in more direct competition with the imported commodity. Imports must then meet the requirements established for the particular area.

Grade, size, quality, and maturity regulations have been issued regularly under both Marketing Order 958 and Marketing Order 959, which regulates the handling of onions grown in South Texas. The current import regulation (7 CFR 980.117) specifies that import requirements for onions are to be based on the seasonal categories of onions grown in both marketing order areas. The import regulations specify that imported onions must meet the requirements of Marketing Order 958 during the June 16 through March 9 period each season and Marketing Order 959 through the remainder of the year. Rulemaking is now in progress that would, if approved, change the beginning date of Marketing Order 958 requirements to June 5 (61 FR 4941; February 9, 1996). Current import regulations also provide that all varieties of imported onions, except for white varieties, must be a minimum of 1½ inches in diameter. This proposal would change the import requirements for the period June 16 through March 9 each marketing year to provide that all varieties of onions except white or red varieties shall be a minimum of 1¾ inches in diameter. While no changes are required in the language of section 980.117, all imported onions other than white or red varieties would be required to meet the minimum size requirement proposed herein.

Based on available information, the Agricultural Marketing Service has determined that the issuance of this proposed rule would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities.

A 30-day comment period is provided to allow interested persons to respond to this proposal. All written comments received within the comment period will be considered before a final determination is made on this matter.

In accordance with section 8e of the Act, the United States Trade

Representative has concurred with the issuance of this proposed rule.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 958

Marketing agreements, Onions, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 958 is proposed to be amended as follows:

PART 958—ONIONS GROWN IN CERTAIN DESIGNATED COUNTIES IN IDAHO, AND MALHEUR COUNTY, OREGON

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 958 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 601–674.

2. Section 958.328 is amended by revising paragraph (a)(3)(ii) to read as follows:

§ 958.328 Handling Regulation.

* * * * *

(a) * * *

(3) * * *

(ii) U.S. No. 1, 1¾ inches minimum to 2¾ maximum diameter; or

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Dated: April 30, 1996.

Robert C. Keeney,

Director, Fruit and Vegetable Division.

[FR Doc. 96–11154 Filed 5–3–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–02–P

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

9 CFR Part 92

[Docket No. 95–084–2]

Permanent Private Quarantine Facilities for Horses

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting; reopening and extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: On February 26, 1996, we published an advance notice of proposed rulemaking requesting public comment on the need for and appropriate standards for the establishment of permanent, private quarantine facilities for horses imported into the United States. To provide additional opportunity for public comment, this notice announces our intention to hold a public meeting, and to reopen and extend the comment period on the advance notice. We are also announcing the availability of a risk assessment related to the establishment of permanent, private quarantine

facilities for horses imported into the United States.

DATES: Consideration will be given only to comments received on or before June 5, 1996. We will also consider comments made at a public meeting to be held in Riverdale, MD, on Friday, May 17, 1996, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

ADDRESSES: Please send an original and three copies of your comments to Docket No. 95-084-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Suite 3C03, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comments refer to Docket 95-095-1. Comments received may be inspected at USDA, room 1141, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Persons wishing to inspect comments are requested to call ahead on (202) 690-2817 to facilitate entry into the comment reading room. The public meeting will be held at the USDA Center, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Joyce Bowling, Staff Veterinarian, National Center for Import and Export, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 39, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231, (301) 734-6479; or e-mail: jbowling@aphis.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The regulations in 9 CFR part 92 (referred to below as the regulations) govern the importation into the United States of specified animals and animal products in order to prevent the introduction into the United States of various communicable diseases. The regulations require that certain animals be quarantined upon arrival in the United States as a condition of importation. There are two types of quarantine facilities for animals being imported into the United States: government operated facilities and privately operated facilities. The regulations contain requirements for the approval of temporary private quarantine facilities for horses; however, the regulations do not provide for the approval of permanent private quarantine facilities for horses.

In an advance notice of proposed rulemaking published in the Federal Register on February 26, 1996 (61 FR 7079, Docket No. 95-084-1), we requested public comment on the need for and appropriate standards for the establishment of permanent private quarantine facilities for horses imported into the United States.

To provide additional opportunity for public comment, we will hold a public

meeting on Friday, May 17, 1996. The meeting will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the offices of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD. We are seeking recommendations concerning the need for permanent, private quarantine facilities, locations where such additional facilities may be needed, potential standards for building the facilities, and regulatory oversight. Copies of a risk assessment related to the establishment of permanent, private horse quarantine facilities will be available at the meeting, or may be obtained from Dr. Joyce Bowling (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

The meeting will be divided into three sessions dealing with the following issues:

1. Equine diseases of concern to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
2. Requirements for building USDA owned and operated facilities and the costs involved.
3. The risk assessment.

Each session will start with a short presentation by an APHIS representative. Afterward, members of the public will be provided an opportunity to ask questions and make comments concerning that session. It is anticipated that 90 minutes will be allotted for each session.

A representative of APHIS will preside at the public meeting. The presiding officer may limit the time for each presentation so that everyone is accommodated and all interested persons have an opportunity to participate. Any written statements submitted will be made part of the record. A transcript will be made of the public meeting and will be placed in the rulemaking record and will be available for public inspection.

Any persons wishing to make presentations longer than 5 minutes, or presentations that will require audiovisual equipment, should contact Dr. Bowling in advance of the meeting.

APHIS will consider the comments and recommendations from the meeting in making a decision about whether to propose approval of permanent, private horse quarantine facilities and, if so, the standards to be proposed. Any such proposal would be published in the Federal Register for public comment.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1622; 19 U.S.C. 1306; 21 U.S.C. 102-105, 111, 114a, 134a, 134b, 134c, 134d, 134f, 135, 136, and 136a; 31 U.S.C. 9701; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, 371.2(d).

Done in Washington, DC, this 1st day of May 1996.

Terry L. Medley,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 96-11212 Filed 5-3-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

9 CFR Parts 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, and 98

[Docket No. 94-106-2]

Importation of Animals and Animal Products; Public Hearings

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of public hearing.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is hosting a public hearing on the proposed rule on the importation of animals and animal products that was published in the Federal Register on April 18, 1996. The hearing will provide an additional opportunity for the public to comment on the proposal, which would establish criteria for foreign "regions" based on risk class levels. The criteria would be used to establish importation requirements for particular animals and animal products from different regions outside the United States.

DATES: The public hearing will be held in Riverdale, MD, on May 22 and, if there are more registered speakers than can be heard in one day, on May 23, 1996. The hearing will begin at 9 a.m. and is scheduled to end at 5 p.m. each day.

ADDRESSES: The public hearing will be held at the USDA Center at Riverside, Conference Center, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Gary Colgrove, Chief Staff Veterinarian, National Center for Import and Export, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 38, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231, (301) 734-8590.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

A public hearing will be held on the notice of proposed rulemaking on the importation of animals and animal products, published by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in the Federal Register on April 18, 1996 (61 FR 16977-17105, Docket No. 94-106-1). The public hearing will be held in Riverdale, MD, on May 22 and, if there are more registered speakers than can be heard in one day, on May 23, 1996.