



November 20, 2018

Dr. Theresa Tam  
Public Health Agency of Canada  
100 Colonnade Road  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

Dear Dr. Tam,

via mail and e-mail: [drtheresa.tam@canada.ca](mailto:drtheresa.tam@canada.ca)

Re: Mitigation of Risks to Animal and Public Health from Dog Importation into Canada

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) is concerned about the potential disease threat to animals and the public from the largely unregulated importation of dogs into Canada. By way of this letter, we respectfully ask for your leadership and support in helping to address this important issue.

The CVMA is the national and international voice for Canada's veterinarians. The CVMA facilitates the development of unified viewpoints on issues for which the veterinary profession advocates and in which it believes. The CVMA is comprised of over 5,500 licensed veterinarians working in all of Canada's provinces and territories as private general and specialist practitioners, researchers, educators and public servants.

Veterinarians provide unique expertise with respect to the health and welfare of all animals including food-producing animals (livestock, poultry, aquaculture), equine, zoo, laboratory, and companion animals such as dogs and cats), among other species. The CVMA membership comprises Canada's national veterinary voice and a source of authoritative expertise on veterinary science, animal health and welfare, and veterinary public health.

A priority for Canadian veterinarians includes promotion and support of the health, and welfare of animals which in turn underpins a safe and secure food supply, a strong economy by facilitating international trade in animals and animal products, and public health.

Over the past several years, the CVMA has grown increasingly concerned about the importation of dogs into Canada as companion animals from a number of countries around the world. In many cases the countries of origin do not have the high standards we enjoy in Canada in areas of public health, and animal health and welfare. In addition, diseases of animals and zoonotic diseases may be endemic in such countries, but absent from Canada. The CVMA's concern is based not only on hypothetical risks but also on concrete examples of parasitic, viral and bacterial diseases having entered into Canada by way of dogs, and directly impacting animal and human health. It is not acceptable in the CVMA's view that dogs are permitted to be imported into Canada without comprehensive risk mitigation strategies in place that are designed to protect Canadians and Canada's animal resource base, including policies, regulations and educational initiatives.

[canadianveterinarians.net](http://canadianveterinarians.net)  
[veterinairesauCanada.net](http://veterinairesauCanada.net)

339, rue Booth Street  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1R 7K1

t • (800) 567-2862  
f • (613) 236-9681  
[admin@cvma-acmv.org](mailto:admin@cvma-acmv.org)

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The CVMA has taken a number of actions over the past several years to investigate and assess the issues surrounding dog importation, to engage its members and external stakeholders, and to develop tools for veterinarians and importers to help promote a precautionary approach to importing dogs into Canada.

These actions include:

- Participating in the 2016 Canadian National Canine Importation Working Group including the preparation of its report <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/canadian-canine-importation-working-group-report>
- Holding a National Workshop on Dog Importation for veterinarians at the 2016 CVMA Convention in Niagara Falls, ON <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/news-events/news/nic-forum-importation-dogs-canada>
- Developing and publishing a CVMA position Statement on the Importation of Dogs into Canada during 2016 <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/importation-of-dogs-into-canada-position-statement>
- Organizing a national Ad Hoc Working Group on Dog Importation with participation from the CVMA's National Issues and Animal Welfare Committees, provincial veterinary organizations, Humane Canada (formerly Canadian Federation of Humane Societies), the Canadian Kennel Club, provincial and federal government agencies including the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and a canine rescue organization.
- Developing and publishing a tool for veterinarians – a Veterinarian's Dog Importation Checklist designed to promote excellent communication between the veterinary practitioner and client with respect to risk management around dog importation. <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/news-events/news/veterinarian-checklist-dog-importation>

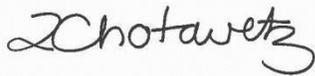
The CVMA's position on dog importation referred to above states, in part:

*...The CVMA encourages the federal government to play a leadership role in the development of effective policies, legislation, regulation, and risk management strategies at the national level. In addition, the CVMA encourages development and implementation of educational initiatives by stakeholder organizations to inform their members about animal health, public health, animal welfare risks, and the associated mitigation strategies pertaining to the importation to and transboundary movement of dogs within Canada...*

The CVMA is aware of the federal regulatory challenges that exist with respect to ensuring that the risk of disease incursion into Canada by way of imported dogs is minimized, however it feels that more could be, and should be done. In this regard, the CVMA would be pleased to work with the Public Health Agency of Canada leveraging the tools and resources of both organizations to better inform health care providers, the public health and veterinary communities, and the public of the inherent risks of dog importation, and practical risk management strategies.

I would be pleased to discuss a forward direction with you and your colleagues. In this regard, kindly contact the CEO of CVMA, Mr. Jost am Rhyn ([jamrhyn@cvma-acmv.org](mailto:jamrhyn@cvma-acmv.org)) at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Terri Chotowetz  
CVMA President

Cc: Dr. Jaspinder Komal, CFIA via email: [jaspinder.komal@canada.ca](mailto:jaspinder.komal@canada.ca)  
Dr. Steven Sternthal, PHAC via email: [steven.sternthal@canada.ca](mailto:steven.sternthal@canada.ca)

SR:TC/ds

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