Containment Facility Inspections

Last Modified:

One of the purposes of PPQ permits is to prevent the dissemination of plant pests into or through the United States. As a consequence, PPQ may only issue permits for certain organisms when the receiving facility can adequately contain the organisms so as to prevent dissemination of the organisms.

Containment of regulated organisms may be accomplished by a combination of proper handling of the regulated organisms and by physical and security attributes of the premises where the regulated organisms will be held. PPQ containment specialists can determine the adequacy of a facility either by a computer-assisted facility evaluation (CAFÉ) or by a full inspection which includes an onsite inspection of the facility.

All facilities with PPQ-regulated organisms may be inspected at any time by agency officials during normal business hours.

Criteria Used To Determine the Kind of Evaluation (CAFÉ or Full) Needed Before Permit Issuance

- Guidance for Containment Evaluation of Arthropod/Snail Permit Applications When Containment Is Required (60.18 KB)

- Guidance for Containment Evaluation of Plant Pathogens and Noxious Weeds Permit Applications When Containment Is Required (64.09 KB)
- Guidance for Containment Evaluation of Diagnostic Permit Applications (49.59 KB)

Related Information

If you're applying for a PPQ permit that meets the criteria for an inspection and your facility or laboratory has not been previously inspected, then you should anticipate a 1- to 3-month delay in processing your application.

When PPQ evaluates the containment capabilities of a facility, we examine physical and operational characteristics relative to the risks of the organisms and their methods of actual or potential dispersal from the facility. The operational characteristics of the facility are developed by the applicant. To prepare this document, you may use the Outline for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (9.93 KB). For butterflies, use this Outline for Standard Operating Procedures (9.28 KB). These documented operational features will be confirmed during the inspection.

Containment Guidelines

- Educational Displays of Adult, Butterflies and Moths (Lepidoptera) (122.9 KB)
- Noxious Weeds and Parasitic Plants (89.68 KB)
- Non-Indigenous, Phytophagous Arthropods and Their Parasitoids and Predators (54.9 KB)
- Receipt, Rearing, and Display of Non-Indigenous Arthropods in Zoos, Museums, and Other Public Displays (125.52 KB)
- Plant Pathogenic Nematodes (222.68 KB)
- Non-Indigenous Snails (157.98 KB)
- Plant Pathogenic Bacteria (184.31 KB)
- Viral Plant Pathogens and Their Vectors (132.04 KB)
- Fungal Plant Pathogens (140.14 KB)

Before beginning construction of a containment facility, contact the PPQ Pest Permits Team to discuss our requirements with a Containment Facility Evaluation Specialist.

Frequently Asked Questions

Expand All

Do I need to have my laboratory inspected? The State inspector was already here (or CDC or Safety Officer).

The permit that you have applied for is a Federal permit, and therefore the inspections are done by Federal personnel. State inspectors are often invited to our inspections as a courtesy, and we listen to any valid concerns they may have. PPQ 526 permits are issued for live plant pests and diseases, as well as biocontrol organisms. They require a different inspection than that of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which deals with human pathogens. Institutional Safety Officers do not conduct our Federal inspections, but they may be present if they want to be. Do not confuse PPQ 526 permit inspections with inspections for soil import compliance or genetically modified organisms.

Why does my facility need to be inspected?

To get a PPQ 526 permit, the researcher must have a facility (laboratory, greenhouse, growth chamber) that adequately contains the organism (7 CFR 330). APHIS officials will determine the adequacy of the facility during their containment inspection.

Why do I need a biosafety cabinet to open shipments from foreign sources?

Shipments from foreign sources (even “pure” cultures) may be contaminated with fungal spores, bacteria, minute weed seeds, nematodes, and other plant pathogens. The biosafety cabinet has HEPA filters and air flow patterns that prevent contaminating aerosols from getting out of the cabinet and into the environment.

Contact Us

For questions about permits for regulated organisms and soil:

Pest Permits Team

Email: pest.permits@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-2285

Alt-Phone: 866-524-5421

Print