



Memorandum D19-9-3

Ottawa, January 17, 2023

Importation and Exportation of Human Remains and Other Human Tissues

In Brief

1. This memorandum has been updated to change contact information under paragraph 13.

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) assists the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) in the administration of the [Quarantine Act](#) and the [Quarantine Regulations](#) established thereunder. This memorandum outlines the conditions under which cadavers, other human remains, organs and tissues may be imported into or exported from Canada.

Legislation

[Customs Tariff](#) – Tariff Item 9832.00.00

[Customs Act](#) – section 2 (1)

[Quarantine Act](#) – sections 5, 44, 45 and 46

Guidelines and General Information

Definitions

1. Use the following definitions when applying this memorandum:

Cadavers, body parts and other human remains

include:

- (a) the body of a deceased person in its entirety;
- (b) part(s) of the human body including: the head, limbs, trunk, appendages, organs, tissue or cells;
- (c) skeletons;
- (d) skulls;

- (e) anthropological or archaeological specimens; and,
- (f) other bones.

Note: *Cremated human remains* are excluded from the definition. Once declared, cremated human remains can be released.

Communicable disease

a human disease that is caused by an infectious agent or a biological toxin and poses a risk of significant harm to public health, or a disease listed in the schedule of the [Quarantine Act](#), and includes an infectious agent that causes a communicable disease.

Death certificate

a medical certificate of death that is signed by an authorized person of the jurisdiction where the death occurred, specifying the date, location and cause(s) of death. Each country has laws and/or regulations regarding who is authorized to issue a medical certificate of death. Generally speaking, the attending physician or coroner is authorized to issue a medical certificate of death.

Hermetic seal

containers that are hermetically sealed and are constructed so that when closed and fastened is completely airtight.

Leak Proof Container

a container that is puncture-resistant and sealed in a manner to contain all contents and prevent leakage of fluids during handling, transport, or shipping.

Quarantine Officer

a medical practitioner or other qualified health care practitioner who is designated as a Quarantine Officer under the [Quarantine Act](#).

Screening officer

a border services officer who is an officer within the meaning of subsection 2(1) of the [Customs Act](#).

Vector

a pathogenic agent (e.g. an insect or animal) that is capable of transmitting a communicable disease.

Importation of Human Remains Into Canada

1. As a minimum requirement, human remains must be transported in a leak proof container.
2. Upon importation, cadavers, body parts and other human remains must be accompanied by a death certificate. If the death certificate is written in a language other than English or French, the importer or exporter must provide a translation into either official language.

3. Death certificates should be considered valid unless a screening officer suspects that there has been fraud involved. In such cases, a quarantine officer is to be notified.

4. Depending on the presence or absence of a death certificate and the cause(s) of death, screening officers are to follow these protocols:

- (a) If the death certificate clearly indicates that the deceased did not have a communicable disease the remains can be released;
- (b) If the death certificate does not set out the immediate cause of death or any antecedent causes, if the container is:
 - (i) hermetically sealed, the remains can be released with an advisory that the container should not be opened; or,
 - (ii) not hermetically sealed, the screening officer must contact the quarantine officer.
- (c) If there is no death certificate accompanying the cadaver, body part or other human remains:
 - (i) the screening officer must contact the quarantine officer; or
- (d) If the death certificate indicates that the deceased had a communicable disease and if the container is:
 - (i) hermetically sealed, the remains can be released with an advisory that the container should not be opened; or,
 - (ii) not hermetically sealed, the screening officer must contact the quarantine officer.

Notes:

- A CBSA document will not be issued for the importation of human remains.
- Some air carriers may require that human remains be transported in a hermetically sealed container.

5. A screening officer must also inform a quarantine officer if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the cadaver, body part or human remains have a communicable disease or arrive in a damaged state (e.g., the hermetic seal appears broken, the container is leaking, the container has been damaged, or appears to have been compromised). This applies whether or not a death certificate has been provided.

6. Communicable diseases of concern do not include HIV/AIDS or hepatitis. A list of these diseases can be found in Appendix A and the schedule at the end of the *Quarantine Act*. Therefore, unless there is another reason why the cadaver, body part or human remains are being detained, the remains should be released.

7. Persons wishing to import a cadaver, body part or other human remains where no death certificate is available can assist the quarantine officer by providing other evidence, such as a letter from a coroner, identifying the cadaver, body part or other human remains and attesting that they are free of vectors. If written in a language other than English or French, the importer or exporter must provide a translation into either official language.

8. If a quarantine officer is concerned about the potential public health risk posed by the cadaver, body part or human remains, the quarantine officer will issue a directive to the conveyance operator indicating the precautions to be taken in handling and/or transporting the cadaver to its destination.

Importation of Cremated Human Remains Into Canada

9. Cremated human remains, because they do not pose a quarantine risk, do not require a death certificate. However, it is recommended that when transporting the cremated remains that the importer should carry a copy of the death and cremation certificate and ensure that the remains are in a container that can easily be scanned (e.g., cardboard, wood or plastic).

Importation of Human Cells, Organs and Tissues for Transplant Into Canada

10. Human cells, organs and tissues that are imported for transplantation in accordance with the [Food and Drugs Act](#) are not subject to the above requirements and therefore a quarantine officer does not need to be called. Because organs for transplantation are transported hospital-to-hospital, it is expected that packaging, transportation, and handling meet universal precautions. The urgent importation of organs and tissues for transplantation should be facilitated as expeditiously as possible.

11. Cargo control documents are not required for the importation of human cells, organs and tissues. However, where cargo control documents have been issued, they may be acquitted by a reference to this memorandum.

12. For more information regarding the importation of human cells, organs or tissues for research, contact:

Importation and Biosafety Programs
Office of Laboratory Security
Center for Emergency Preparedness and Response
Public Health Agency of Canada
100 Colonnade Road
Ottawa ON K1A 0K9

Fax: 613-941-0596

Exportation of Human Remains and Other Human Tissues From Canada

13. In order to export a cadaver, body part or other human remains where the deceased had a communicable disease, the exporter must obtain permission from the Director General, Centre for Border Litigation and Regulatory Affairs at:

Director General, Centre for Border Litigation and Regulatory Affairs
Public Health Agency of Canada
100 Colonnade Rd.
1124 Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

E-mail: ra.exemption-ar@phac-aspc.gc.ca

Additional Information

14. Information regarding the importation of a casket or coffin containing human remains or the temporary importation a casket or coffin can be found in [Memorandum D8-3-11, Tariff Item No. 9832.00.00 Coffins or Caskets](#).

15. Questions concerning the administration of these procedures from a CBSA perspective should be directed to the [CBSA Border Information Service \(BIS\)](#) online, or call BIS toll-free in Canada at **1-800-461-9999**. If you are calling from outside Canada, you can access BIS by calling 204-983-3500 or 506-636-5064 (long-distance charges will apply). BIS agents are available, during regular business hours from Monday to Friday (except holidays), 8:00 to 16:00 local time. TTY is also available within Canada: **1-866-335-3237**.

Appendix A - Schedule of Communicable Diseases of Concern – *Quarantine Act*

(Section 2, subsections 15(2) and 34(2) and sections 45 and 63)

Please note: At the time of publication this list was accurate; however as this list can be changed from time to time, please consult the schedule at the end of the *Quarantine Act*.

- Active pulmonary tuberculosis
- Anthrax
- Argentine hemorrhagic fever
- Bolivian hemorrhagic fever
- Botulism
- Brazilian hemorrhagic fever
- Cholera
- COVID-19 coronavirus disease
- Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever
- Diphtheria
- Ebola hemorrhagic fever
- Lassa fever
- Marburg hemorrhagic fever
- Measles
- Meningococcal meningitis
- Meningococemia
- Pandemic influenza type A
- Plague
- Poliomyelitis
- Rift Valley fever
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)
- Smallpox
- Tularemia
- Typhoid fever
- Venezuelan hemorrhagic fever
- Yellow fever

Appendix B - Quarantine Stations

Halifax International Airport

Halifax, Nova Scotia
 24/7 Phone Line: 902-873-7659
 Office: 902-873-7656
 Fax: 902-872-7657

Jurisdiction: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador

Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport

Montréal, Quebec
 24/7 Phone Line: 514-229-2561
 Office: 514-633-3024
 Fax: 514-633-3031

Jurisdiction: Quebec

MacDonald-Cartier International Airport

Ottawa, Ontario
 24/7 Phone Line: 613-949-1565
 Office: 613-949-2050
 Fax: 613-949-1566

Jurisdiction: Eastern Ontario

Lester B. Pearson International Airport

Toronto, Ontario
 24/7 Phone Line: 416-315-5039
 Office: 905-612-5397
 Fax: 905-612-7987

Jurisdiction: Western and Northern Ontario, and Nunavut

Calgary International Airport

Calgary, Alberta
 24/7 Phone Line: 403-221-3067
 QO backup line: 604-317-1730
 Office: 403-221-3068
 Fax: 403-250-9271

Jurisdiction: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the North West Territories

Vancouver International Airport

Vancouver, British Columbia
 24/7 Phone Line: 604-317-1720
 QO Back-up Line: 604-317-1730
 Office: 604-666-2499
 Fax: 604-666-4947

Jurisdiction: British Columbia and the Yukon

Public Health Agency of Canada

24/7 Phone Line: **1-800-545-7661**

References	
Issuing Office	Program and Policy Management Division Commercial Programs Directorate Commercial and Trade Program Branch
Headquarters File	
Legislative References	<u>Quarantine Act</u> <u>Customs Tariff</u> <u>Customs Act</u> <u>Food and Drugs Act</u>
Other References	<u>D8-3-11</u>
Superseded Memorandum D	D19-9-3 dated August 5, 2022

Final Approval

(check one option, obtain required signatures and date)

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