



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

Animal and Plant  
Health Inspection  
Service

920 Main Campus  
Drive, Suite 200  
Raleigh, NC 27606

March 29, 2016

Dear licensee,

We write to you regarding the care and handling requirements for newborn and infant nondomestic cats 4 weeks (28 days) of age or younger (neonate or neonatal). Among other things, the Animal Welfare Act regulations require licensees to provide these animals with preventive and responsive veterinary care and adequate housing and nutrition, and to ensure that they are handled safely and protected from harm.

Neonatal nondomestic cats have special handling and husbandry needs. Nondomestic cats of this age range are not able to thermoregulate, and do not have fully functioning immune systems to fight off disease and infection. Neonates obtain immunity from their mother, primarily through antibody-rich colostrum (first milk), and should be housed with their mother as long as possible after birth to promote good health. Their health is at risk if they are exposed to other animals or offered for public contact. Until these animals can thermoregulate and are immunocompetent, they should be housed in the controlled environment of a heated, clean, and sheltered enclosure (such as a nursery), or in a clean, sheltered enclosure with the mother and any healthy siblings.

This serves as official notice to exhibitors and dealers that failing to house neonate nondomestic cats in a controlled, sanitary, temperature-controlled environment (as described above), and failing to handle such animals in a manner that does not expose them to public contact, feeding, or handling, are considered noncompliant with the veterinary care and handling requirements of the Animal Welfare Act regulations. See 9 C.F.R. §§ 2.40(a), 2.40(b)(1), 2.40(b)(2), 2.40(b)(4), 2.131(b)(1), 2.131(c)(1), 2.131(c)(3), 2.131(d)(1), 2.131(e).

More information on the requirements of neonatal nondomestic cats may be found in the attached Animal Care Tech Note.

If you have questions, you may contact the Raleigh, NC office at 919-855-7100, the Fort Collins, CO office at 970-494-7478.

Sincerely,

Craig Nowakowski  
Director, Program Support  
Animal Care