

What Paperwork Do I Need to Transport Livestock Across State Lines?

A Practical guide For Livestock Owners & Transporters



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Transporting livestock across state lines is more than just loading animals and hitting the road. Each state has animal health regulations designed to protect livestock industries, prevent disease spread, and ensure animal welfare. Missing or incorrect paperwork can lead to delays, fines, or animals being turned around at checkpoints. Most interstate livestock transport requires a health certificate, official animal identification, and - depending on the state - brand inspections and entry permits.

This guide breaks down what paperwork is commonly required, who is responsible, and how to avoid common mistakes when hauling livestock interstate.

Most Commonly Required Documents:

While requirements vary by state and species, most livestock transport requires:

Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI)

Official Animal Identification

Species-specific Testing

State Entry Permits

Brand Inspection

Always verify requirements with your veterinarian and the destination state before transportation



Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI)

A **Certificate of Veterinary Inspection**, often called a health certificate, is the most commonly required document for interstate livestock movement. **What it is:** A CVI is issued by a **USDA-accredited veterinarian** after examining the animals and confirming they meet the destination state's entry requirement.

Does the CVI have a expiration:

Most CVIs are valid for a limited time, often 30 days or less, depending on the state and species.



What does a CVI Include:

- Owner and Destination information
- Animal Description (species, age, sex, identification)
- Date of Veterinary examination
- Required test Results (if applicable)

Important: Transporters cannot issue CVIs. They must be obtained by the animal owner or shipper through a veterinarian.



Species-Specific Testing Requirements

Different animals have different disease-testing requirements. These vary by destination state but often include:

- **Horses**-Negative Equine Infectious Anemia (Coggins) Test
- **Cattle**- Tuberculosis and brucellosis testing in certain situations
- **Sheep & Goat**- Scrapie Identification and compliance
- **Swine**- Official ID and disease status verification
- **Poultry**- Health Documentation or Flock status declarations

Your Veterinarian will know which tests apply based on species and destination.



Official Animal Identification

Most states require livestock have official identification listed on the CVI.

This may include:

- USDA 840 RFID or metal ear tags
- Scrapie Tags (Sheep & Goats)
- Registered Brands or tattoos
- Microchips (in some cases)

Identification must match what is on the paperwork.



Brand Inspection Requirements

Some states require **brand inspections** to verify **ownership of livestock** before interstate transport, sale, or change of ownership. Brand inspections are separate from **health certificates (CVIs)** and are enforced primarily in western and plains states.

States Require Brand Inspections:

Brand inspections are commonly required in the following states for certain livestock movements (especially cattle and in some cases horses).

Arizona California Colorado Idaho Montana
Nevada New Mexico Oregon Utah Wyoming

Some states may require brand inspections only in specific situations, including Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota and can change.

Brand inspection requirements vary by state. Always confirm current requirements with the appropriate state brand board or department of agriculture before transport.



State Entry Permits:

Many States require a State Entry Permit number in addition to a Certification of Veterinary inspections (CVI) for certain livestock movements, species, or purposes such as sales, exhibition, or commercial transport.

When a State Entry Permit is Typically Required:

State entry permits are most often required when Livestock are:

- Entering a state with disease surveillance programs
- Being transported for sale, auction, or exhibition
- Moving as commercial or high-volume shipments
- Entering states with species-specific restrictions
- Coming from state with differing disease status

Permits are usually issued by the destination state's animal health office and the permit number must appear on the CVI.



Who is responsible for the paperwork?

Understanding responsibility helps avoid last-minute confusion.

- **Livestock Owner/Shipper:** Responsible for obtaining CVIs, tests, permits and inspections.
- **Transporter:** Responsible for hauling safely and legally, and confirming paperwork is present.
- **State Officials:** enforce compliance at borders, checkpoints, and inspections.

Transporters may refuse loads without proper documentation.



Common Mistakes that Cause Delays:

- Expired Health Certificates
- Incorrect destination listed on paperwork
- Missing Brand Inspections
- Assuming intrastate rules apply interstate
- Schedule a vet visit too close to transport date

Plan ahead prevents costly delays

Emergency & Special Circumstances

Emergency livestock transport may have limited exceptions, but documentation is still often required. During disease outbreaks, additional restrictions or permits may apply.

When in doubt, verify before loading.





How Hitch-N-Ride Helps

Hitch-N-Ride connects livestock owners with experienced transporters who understand the importance of legal, safe transport. While Hitch-N-Ride does not issue paperwork, the platform supports informed, compliant hauling by encouraging proper preparation and documentation

Disclaimer:

Livestock Transport regulations change and vary by state and species. This article is for educational purposes only and does not replace guidance from a licensed veterinarian or official state animal health authorities. Always verify requirements with your veterinarian and the destination state before transport.