

Taking Pet Birds To Mexico

Guide to forms and permits needed for moving to Mexico with your birds.

By Sunny Snow

Talk To The Right People

There is not a lot of information on what Mexico requires for importation of pet birds. It also rarely answers e-mails. So, we made a trip to the SEMARNAT office in Merida, Mexico, the closest city to our relocation, to find out the requirements. All cities have SEMARNAT offices, and you can get this information from any of these offices. It is recommended to make an appointment and take a fluent or native Spanish speaker along to ensure there are no misunderstandings of the requirements for importing birds. Our experience in Merida was positive and friendly, and we learned exactly what the Mexican government requires for importing birds. The gentleman we spoke to, Mr. Salvador Canul, spent about an hour answering our questions.

We needed to get a Declaracion General de Pago de Derechos (three actually) from the nearby papeleria (a paper store, any will do). We ran out to the nearest papeleria and returned with the forms which Canul filled out for us. This form shows payment for the permit fee of 385 pesos (roughly \$38). The three forms are taken to any Mexican bank where the fee is paid. The bank stamps all three copies. It keeps a copy, we kept a copy and the third copy is sent with the permit request to the Mexican government.

Mr. Canul also gave us the Formato de Solicitud and instructions to fill it out, which is the request for the importation of birds – CITES certification. Everything is, of course, in Spanish. He told us what papers we need to send to SEMARNAT in Mexico City in addition to the request form.

The papers include: the original receipt (the Declaracion General de Pago de Derechos) to show payment of the fee; original Formato de Solicitud; copy of the CITES Export Permit from the U.S.; color photos of each bird; a letter in Spanish stating why we are bringing the birds, how they are being transported (details of cages, carriers, mode of transport), port of entry, how long we have owned the birds, their origin, identification (leg band numbers), etc.; all U.S. veterinarian papers required for an international move into Mexico including blood work results, etc.

Forms are available for download from the SEMARNAT website. The address to send all the forms and paperwork to is:

Direccion General de Vida Silvestre
Av. Revolucion 1425, Nivel 1, Col. Tlacopac San Angel
Delegacion Alvaro Obregon, C.P. 01040, Mexico D.F.
Telephone: 01 (55) 56-24-33-09

It lists a fax number but, in our experience, there is no fax at this office.

Locate Your Entry Port

The CITES permits from the United States and Mexico are both good for six months, so once these permits are in hand, there is plenty of time for the trip. The exit and entry ports do need to be 'set in concrete' before any paperwork is submitted. For example, we entered Mexico at Brownsville/Matamoros, which is what our paperwork said we were going to do. We could not easily change our minds and decide to fly into Cancun. According to Mr. Canul, this would confuse the inspectors, and they would think we were trying to "pull something" resulting in confiscating or killing the birds and possible detention for us. Be consistent and keep to the plan as described in the paperwork.

It is extremely important to emphasize that the pet birds are family members. In Mexico, pets are treated differently than pets in the United States, and emphasizing that they are your children gets across how important these birds are to your family.

The United States has certain designated ports for the import and export of birds. The only designated ports are Miami, Los Angeles and New York. There are lots of other ports, and the USFWS website lists a number of ports as "designated," but check by calling its customer service number. A Designated Port Exemption Permit — Form 3-200-2, might be needed. It is easy to download from its website, fill it out and send it with the fee of \$100 USD to the region office where the port is located.

For example, we planned on driving to Mexico and crossing at Brownsville, so we sent our request to the region office for

Texas, which is in Albuquerque, New Mexico. There are seven region offices listed on the USFWS website. It takes a couple of weeks to get this permit processed. If time is short, the region office can fax or e-mail the permit to the requestor, and it can call the Wildlife Inspector at the border to let him/her know the request was approved.

Contact The Wildlife Inspector

It is essential to contact the Wildlife Inspector at the border of the crossing site (whether by car or air) because he/she must sign the U.S. CITES Permit before you cross into Mexico. The Wildlife Inspector will also need Wildlife Declaration Form 3-177. This form can be downloaded from the USFWS website and filled it out before meeting with the Inspector to save time.

The key is the signature on the U.S. CITES Permit because it remains valid for the return to the United States with your bird. Even if it is 20 years from now and the permit is long expired, this original signed document will get your bird back into the United States and proves U.S. origin! It is unnecessary to go through the CITES permit process again for a U.S. import permit.

In most ports, there is only one Wildlife Inspector and that person is not always there so it is important to talk to him/her and discuss crossing plans into Mexico. An example is that the Wildlife Inspector in Brownsville was on vacation the entire month of June so it was impossible to cross there for an entire month. They also have periodic training and may be gone for one to two weeks.