



February 26, 2026

Jay Tetzloff
Chief Animal Officer
Blank Park Zoo
7401 SW 9th St
Des Moines IA 50315
jrtetzloff@blankparkzoo.net

Re: Waiver Request (AI-W-26-01)

Mr. Tetzloff,

This letter is in response to your letter dated February 6, 2026, requesting the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) waive the requirements of Iowa Administrative Code §21-65.3(1)(b) which states:

Prairie dogs (Cynomys sp.), tree squirrels (Heliosciurus sp.), rope squirrels (Funisciurus sp.), dormice (Graphiurus sp.), Gambian giant pouched rats (Cricetomys sp.), brush-tailed porcupines (Atherurus sp.), and striped mice (Hybomys sp.) are prohibited from importation into the state.

Pursuant to Iowa Code §17.9A and Iowa Code chapter 159, IDALS has adopted rules addressing the generally applicable standards and processes for the granting of individual waivers. These rules are set out in Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) chapter 21-8. The criteria for reviewing a waiver request is provided in §21-8.4. Upon petition of a person, an agency may in its sole discretion issue a waiver from the requirements of a rule if the agency finds, based on clear and convincing evidence, **ALL** the following:

1. The application of the rule would pose an undue hardship on the person for who the waiver or variance is requested.
2. The waiver or variance from the requirements of a rule in the specific case would not prejudice the substantial legal rights of any person.
3. The provisions of a rule subject to a petition for a waiver or variance are not specifically mandated by statute or another provision of law.
4. Substantially equal protection of public health, safety, and welfare will be afforded by a means other than that prescribed in the particular rule for which the waiver is requested.

As outlined in your letter, we understand the three Prairie Dogs are intended to be imported from Nebraska Wildlife Rehab into Iowa on a permanent basis to complement the Zoo's educational programming. IDALS acknowledges that the Zoo has provided that the Prairie Dogs will undergo extensive testing and health inspections prior to import into Iowa including receiving a Certificate of Veterinarian Inspection. IDALS also acknowledges that the Zoo has identified reasonable and acceptable safeguards to prevent the Prairie Dogs from escaping into the wild including the microchip placement in the Prairie Dogs. IDALS additionally acknowledges that the Zoo is (1) an Association of Zoos and Aquariums accredited zoo, (2) maintains an USDA Animal Welfare Act Class C Exhibitor License, and (3) maintains an IDALS Animal Welfare license. Additionally, the Zoo maintains an Educational Project Permit from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

After consideration of the request, I find that:

1. Application of the rule would pose an undue hardship on you and your businesses.
2. Continuing to grant the waiver would not prejudice the substantial legal rights of any person.
3. The provisions of the administrative rule are not specifically mandated by statute.
4. Substantially equal protection of public health, safety and welfare will be afforded through testing of all animals in conjunction with strict safeguards to prevent their escape.

Therefore, IDALS hereby grants a limited waiver of Iowa Administrative Code §21-65.3(1)(b) for the import of three Prairie Dogs from the Nebraska Wildlife rehab.

Sincerely,

Dr. J.J. Kaisand Digitally signed by Dr. J.J. Kaisand
Date: 2026.02.26 08:28:28 -06'00'

Jeff Kaisand, DVM
State Veterinarian
Animal Industry Division Director