

tax basis. Alternatively, you may pre-pay premiums for the LWOP period on an after-tax basis.

(3) Direct pay. Under the direct pay option, you may pay your share of your FEHB premium on the same schedule of payments that would be made if you were not on LWOP, as described in § 890.502(b) of this chapter. You must make the premium payments directly to your employing agency. The payments you make under the direct pay option are not subject to premium conversion, and are made on an after-tax basis.

(4) Catch-up. Under the catch-up option, you must agree in advance of the LWOP period that: you will continue FEHB coverage while on LWOP; your employer will advance your share of your FEHB premium during your LWOP period; and you will repay the advanced amounts when you return from LWOP. (Described in § 890.502(b) of this chapter.) Your catch-up contributions may be made through premium conversion.

(5) If you remain in FEHB upon your return from LWOP, your catch-up premiums and current premiums will be paid at the same time.

(c) Your return from LWOP constitutes a qualifying life event as described in § 892.101. You may change your premium conversion election (waive if you now participate, or participate if you now waive). The election you choose upon return from LWOP will apply to your current as well as your catch-up premiums.

■ 8. The title for Subpart D and paragraph (b)(1) of § 892.401 are revised to read as follows:

Subpart D—Reemployed Annuitants and Survivor Annuitants

§ 892.401 Am I eligible for premium conversion if I retire and then come back to work for the Federal Government?

* * * * *

(b)(1) If you do not waive premium conversion, your FEHB coverage will be transferred to your employing agency, and your employing agency will assume responsibility for contributing the Government share of your FEHB coverage. Your coverage, including what FEHB plans you are eligible to enroll in, will be based on your status as an active employee and your employing agency will deduct your premiums from your salary.

* * * * *

■ 9. A new § 892.402 is added to read as follows:

§ 892.402 I am a survivor annuitant as well as an active Federal employee; am I eligible for premium conversion?

(a) If you are a survivor annuitant enrolled in FEHB who is receiving an annuity and you are employed in a position that conveys FEHB eligibility and is covered by the premium conversion plan, you are eligible to participate in premium conversion. (b)(1) If you wish to participate in premium conversion, you must notify your employing agency. Your employing agency will transfer in your FEHB coverage from the retirement system, and your employing agency will assume responsibility for contributing the government share of your FEHB coverage. Your coverage, including what FEHB plans you are eligible to enroll in, will be based on your status as an active employee and your employing agency will deduct your premiums from your salary.

(2) If you do not notify your employing agency that you wish to participate in premium conversion, you will keep your FEHB coverage as a survivor annuitant, but your contributions towards your FEHB premiums will be made on an after-tax basis. Your status as an annuitant under the retirement regulations and your right to continue FEHB as a survivor annuitant following your period of employment is unaffected.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

7 CFR Part 301

[Docket No. 02-037-2]

Karnal Bunt; Regulated Areas

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Affirmation of interim rule as final rule.

SUMMARY: We are adopting as a final rule, without change, an interim rule that amended the Karnal bunt regulations by adding certain areas in Arizona and Texas to the list of regulated areas either because they were found during detection and delineating surveys to contain a bunted wheat kernel, or because they fell within the 3-mile-wide buffer zone around fields or areas affected with Karnal bunt. The interim rule also removed certain individual fields and other areas in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas from

the list of regulated areas, either because detection and delineating surveys showed them to be free of Karnal bunt, or because they had not been used to produce Karnal bunt host crops within the last 5 years, or because they had been used to produce Karnal bunt host crops in 1 or more years following initial regulation and the crops have been tested and found free of Karnal bunt. The interim rule was necessary to help prevent the spread of Karnal bunt into noninfected areas of the United States and to relieve restrictions that are no longer warranted.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The interim rule became effective on October 3, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Robert G. Spaide, Senior Program Manager, Surveillance and Emergency Programs Planning and Coordination, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 134, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236; (301) 734-7819.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Karnal bunt is a fungal disease of wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), durum wheat (*Triticum durum*), and triticale (*Triticum aestivum* X *Secale cereale*), a hybrid of wheat and rye. Karnal bunt is caused by the smut fungus *Tilletia indica* (Mitra) Mundkur and is spread primarily through the movement of infected seed. Some countries in the international wheat market regulate Karnal bunt as a fungal disease requiring quarantine; therefore, without measures taken by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), United States Department of Agriculture, to prevent its spread, the presence of Karnal bunt in the United States could have significant consequences with regard to the export of wheat to international markets.

Upon detection of Karnal bunt in Arizona in March of 1996, Federal quarantine and emergency actions were imposed to prevent the interstate spread of the disease to other wheat producing areas in the United States. The quarantine continues in effect, although it has since been modified, both in terms of its physical boundaries and in terms of its restrictions on the production and movement of regulated articles from regulated areas. The regulations regarding Karnal bunt are set forth in 7 CFR 301.89-1 through 301.89-16 (referred to below as the regulations).

In an interim rule effective and published in the **Federal Register** on October 3, 2002 (67 FR 61975-61980, Docket No. 02-037-1), we amended the regulations by adding certain areas in