

The 25-Year Wagon Import Cheat Sheet

The forbidden-fruit wagons America never got — and exactly how to bring one home, legally.

The rule in one line

A vehicle at least **25 years old** is exempt from federal motor-vehicle safety standards and can be imported for U.S. road use — even if it was never sold here. The clock runs from the **month the car was built**, not its model year.

The three forms you file (at the border, via CBP)

NHTSA HS-7	Safety declaration — check Box 1 , “25 or more years old.” That single box lets a never-U.S. wagon in without modification.
EPA 3520-1	Emissions declaration — the older-vehicle exemption (Code E) covers original-configuration cars.
CBP 7501	Customs entry summary — classifies the vehicle and sets the duty owed.

25 years vs 21 years — two agencies, two clocks

NHTSA (safety) requires **25 years**. **EPA** (emissions) exempts a vehicle at **21 years** if it’s in original, unmodified configuration with its original-type engine. You must clear both, so the binding number is **25**. The 21-year figure mainly matters if the engine was swapped.

The process, step by step

1. Confirm the exact build date from the VIN and compliance plate — it must clear 25 years **to the month**.
2. Buy the car and arrange export: deregistration, export certificate, and title.
3. Book ocean freight — usually RoRo (roll-on/roll-off) or a shared container — to a U.S. port.
4. Clear customs: your broker files HS-7, EPA 3520-1 and CBP 7501, and you pay the duty.
5. Take delivery, then title and register in your state (local inspection/emissions rules vary).

What trips people up

- **Model year vs. build date.** A “2001” car built in late 2000 helps you; a January 2001 build won’t qualify until January 2026.
- **Duties change.** Import duty and tariff rates come from current CBP/HTS schedules and shift over time — confirm the rate for the month you import, not a figure you read online.
- **State titling is separate** from federal admission. Clearing customs doesn’t guarantee your DMV will register it — check before you buy.
- **“Show or Display” is a different rule.** The 25-year exemption is the clean, road-legal route — don’t confuse the two.

Eligible now — and coming soon

Wagon	Years	U.S.-legal from
Audi RS2 Avant	1994–1995	2019 — now
Subaru Legacy GT-B (BG/BH)	1996–2003	2021 — now
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	2003–2004	2028

Wagon	Years	U.S.-legal from
Audi RS4 Avant (B7)	2006–2008	2031
BMW M5 Touring (E61) V10	2007–2010	2032
Audi RS6 Avant (C6) V10	2008–2010	2033
Audi RS4 Avant (B9)	2018–2024	2043
BMW 330i Touring (G21)	2019–present	2044

The live **Wagon Import Countdown** at allthewagons.com/import-countdown tracks every forbidden-fruit wagon and the exact date each becomes legal.

Sources: NHTSA importation guidance & HS-7 ([nhtsa.gov](https://www.nhtsa.gov)); EPA form 3520-1 "Code E" ([epa.gov](https://www.epa.gov)); U.S. Customs & Border Protection entry procedure ([cbp.gov](https://www.cbp.gov)). General information, not legal or customs advice — confirm current requirements with CBP, NHTSA, EPA and your state DMV before importing.