



February 28, 2017

Kevin Shea, Administrator
 United States Department of Agriculture
 Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

On February 3rd the USDA purged from the agency's website tens of thousands of pages of inspection reports, enforcement actions, annual reports, and other key records regarding enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the Horse Protection Act (HPA). Simply put, this action endangers the lives of animals and puts consumers at risk.

As Massachusetts organizations working on behalf of animals, we request that the agency immediately reinstate records previously available on the agency's site and that the agency continue to make these and future records available on an ongoing basis.

The USDA, and particularly APHIS, have been repeatedly criticized over the years by the USDA's own Inspector General for failing to effectively enforce the requirements of the AWA. Accordingly, Massachusetts animal protection organizations relied upon this information to ensure that animals imported for sale, used for exhibition, or tested upon in laboratories in the Commonwealth receive—at the very least—the basic protections mandated by the Animal Welfare Act.

The USDA's action has broad impacts for both people and animals. It hurts the consumer who purchases an animal at a pet store and won't be able to research whether that animal was purchased from a "puppy mill" that violated the AWA. The lack of access to this information impacts shelters and rescues in Massachusetts because well-intentioned, unsuspecting consumers bring home puppy mill puppies who often have a wide range of (often expensive) health problems and behavioral issues due to a lack of socialization, resulting in their surrender.

The action also hurts the consumer who seeks a Tennessee walking horse and wants to ensure the breeder never violated the Horse Protection Act. It undermines efforts to address inhumane laboratory conditions that impair the scientific integrity of animal research. It increases the risk of disease transmission from, and dangerous encounters with, wild animals in public exhibition.

We commend APHIS for taking a first step in responding to the tremendous outcry for restoring transparency by announcing that a small batch of annual reports from research institutions and inspection reports for certain federal research facilities that the agency regulates under the AWA will soon be posted. This is a good start—however, the full database for AWA and HPA materials must be restored. Materials from other AWA-regulated categories (e.g., puppy mills, zoos, circuses, airlines, etc.) and HPA (horse soring records and list of industry-appointed inspectors) must, once again, be made available.

We have forwarded a copy of this letter to the Massachusetts Congressional delegation, most of whom have signed onto letters to the USDA and President Trump, also urging reinstatement of past records and the continued posting of future records.

Carter Luke, CEO and President
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Animals

Stephanie Harris, MA State Director
The Humane Society of the United States

Theodora Capaldo, Ed.D., President
New England Anti-vivisection Society

John Linehan, President and CEO
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Carmine Dicenso, Executive Director
Dakin Humane Society

Nadine Pellegrini, Director of Advocacy
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Beth Allgood, US Country Director
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Jill O'Connell, Executive Director
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John Perreault, Executive Director
Berkshire Humane Society

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Ann Lindsay, President
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Sharon DuBois, Founder and President
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Keith Lovett, Director of Zoological Services
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Diana Cartier, President
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Mellisa Raposo, President
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Danika Oriol-Morway, Sanctuary Director
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Robert Ware, U.S. Executive Director
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Sheryl Becker, President
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Kelly Witwicki, Director of Communications
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Linda Murphy, Director
Mass Coalition to End Puppy Mills

cc: Members of the Massachusetts Congressional delegation

