

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



PET ANIMAL CARE FACILITIES ACT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AUDIT, JUNE 2015

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CONCERN

We found the Department of Agriculture (Department) lacks sufficient controls to ensure the timely inspection of licensed facilities; the effective use of enforcement authority against non-compliant facilities; effective oversight of the inspection process; and that actual and perceived conflicts of interest are identified and disclosed.

KEY FACTS AND FINDINGS

BACKGROUND

- As of January 2015, the Program had failed to conduct routine inspections within the prescribed timeframe at 357 of the 1,839 licensed facilities (19 percent). Of the 357 facilities, 143 were more than 12 months overdue for an inspection (40 percent). One facility had not received an inspection in 28 months.
- In Calendar Year 2014, the Program failed to conduct complaint investigations within the 5 day requirement for 13 of the 20 complaints in our sample (65 percent). One investigation did not occur until 47 days after the complaint was received by the Department.
- The Department does not regularly and consistently enforce penalties against facilities found to be in violation of regulations. In our sample of 45 routine inspections, inspectors identified at least one violation at 36 facilities; eight of the 36 facilities were found to have five or more violations, some of which directly affected the health and welfare of the animals in the facilities. However, the Department did not issue civil fines, cease and desist orders, or license suspensions or revocations for any of these facilities.
- The Department lacks key controls for ensuring that inspections and enforcement actions are consistent among inspectors and that all pet care facilities are treated equitably across the state. We found that inspectors do not consistently classify the severity level of violations or conduct reinspections or fail facilities when violations are found, and the Department has not provided supervisory review of inspections and enforcement actions.
- The Department lacks sufficient controls for ensuring staff identify and disclose actual and perceived conflicts of interest in order to ensure public confidence in the Program.

- The Pet Animal Care Facilities Act Program licenses and inspects facilities that care for pet animals, which includes breeders, boarders, shelters, groomers, and trainers.
- As of January 2015, the Program had 1,839 licensed facilities in its database.
- The Program has five inspectors tasked with inspecting facilities, locating unlicensed facilities, and conducting complaint investigations.
- The Program is funded through license fees, which are collected each year and range from \$175 to \$400, depending on the type of license.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Agriculture should:

- Improve oversight of the inspection process to ensure inspections are timely, effective, and in accordance with Pet Animal Care Facilities Act requirements.
- Strengthen Program effectiveness by using enforcement provisions to hold facility owners accountable for complying with Program requirements.
- Improve controls for ensuring inspection results and enforcement actions are consistent across inspection areas.
- Improve controls for inspection staff to identify and disclose actual and perceived conflicts of interest.

The Department agreed with these recommendations.