

USDA Announces Actions Marking New Era of Companion Animal Welfare

By USDA

Washington, D.C. – Secretary Brooke L. Rollins, U.S. Department of Agriculture, held a Strikeforce roundtable with federal agency partners where she announced actions to usher in a new era of companion animal oversight under the leadership of the Trump Administration.

Partners at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the US Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, the USDA Office of Inspector General (US OIG) and the DOJ OIG participated in the event.

"In the Trump Administration, animals deserve to be treated with respect and cared for properly. Today's announcement will lay out new standards to improve animal welfare, deploy new training and staff to continuously monitor facilities under our care, and build further public awareness to protect our companion animals," said Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins. "Today's Strikeforce meeting will continue to build and develop policies to protect our nation's animals."

"How we treat animals reflects our values and our responsibility to protect both animal and human health," said HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. "Under President Trump, we are strengthening oversight, enforcing the law, and holding those who mistreat animals accountable. At HHS, we are also driving a fundamental shift toward human-based research, with more than 20 actions to advance better science and reduce unnecessary animal testing. Today, we launched a new webpage so the public can see our progress."

Having delivered two dozen animal welfare priorities, the Administration, through APHIS, is taking new steps to strengthen dog, horse and fellow companion animal welfare including:



Advancing Updates to Standards of Care

In 2027, USDA will put forth a regulatory proposal based on 7,522 unique public comments received in response to our Request for Information that overwhelmingly support strengthening AWA standards for dogs. APHIS is finalizing review following robust public input governing the humane care, medical care, exercise and socialization, record keeping and research use of dogs under the Animal Welfare Act.



Delivering Breeder Refresher Notices

USDA is amplifying its communication and emphasizing the rules through the issuance of over 2,000 regulatory refresher mailings to dog breeding facilities to make crystal clear what the law requires for humane care. Regular communication will strengthen compliance.

Deploying Welfare Watchdogs

USDA recently deployed the Animal Protection Bureau (APB), a dedicated unit of specialists formed to enhance nationwide oversight, strengthen enforcement, and advance the humane treatment of animals covered under federal law.

The newly formed team is in action, playing a pivotal role in supporting the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and Horse Protection Act (HPA) programs by conducting targeted compliance reviews, coordinating investigative efforts, and implementing modernized enforcement strategies. Through its close work with inspectors, veterinary officers, legal partners and program leaders, their work is helping identify unlicensed or unauthorized operations, improve inspections, and proactively address risks to companion animal welfare across the country.

Increase Inspector General Staffing

In the coming year, USDA OIG John Walk plans to increase its special agent investigator working on animal fighting and other matters by 20%. The OIG supplements APHIS investigations with administrative and legal escalation and the work has resulted in successful enforcement against bad actors, including prosecuting dog fighting and substandard breeding operations.

Compliance Goal

In 2026, USDA prioritized removing repeat bad actors from programs —denying or terminating 8 dog breeder licenses, suspending 6, revoking 5, and, with DOJ, pursuing a serious danger case against a dog breeder and supporting criminal investigations involving three facilities with dogs. In 2027, USDA will intensify this work by identifying dog breeders skirting welfare requirements. Within six months, USDA will review all dog breeders who have surrendered a USDA or equivalent state license in the past two years and pursue action against anyone operating in circumvention of the Animal Welfare Act.

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