



United States Senate

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June 27, 2019

The Honorable Phyllis K. Fong
Inspector General
United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Inspector General
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Inspector General Fong:

I write to inquire about the timing and scope of your office's evaluation of actions taken by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to address troubling findings in a nearly decade-old audit of puppy mills. As you know, this review was part of your agency's fiscal year 2019 work plan.

A 2010 USDA inspector general audit revealed horrendous treatment of animals and a lack of enforcement by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. The report cited animals with rotting flesh left unattended for days, the failure of inspectors to accurately report repeat offenses, and the agency as a whole taking few enforcement measures against violators. Many of these violations were the actions of large-scale breeders, known as "puppy mills."

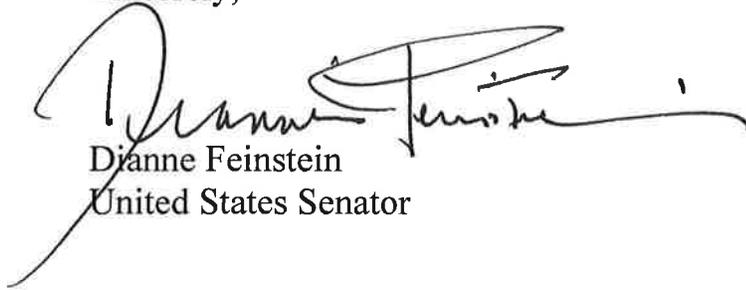
The audit report included several recommended actions that the APHIS Animal Care Program could take to improve animal welfare, breeder compliance, and USDA enforcement. However, I understand that USDA has taken few, if any, of the recommended actions specified in the 2010 audit.

California recently enacted Assembly Bill 485, which requires that all pets sold at pet stores come from a public animal control agency rather than sources such as commercial breeders or puppy mills. California's law effectively bans harmful puppy mills and helps reduce the amount of animals in shelters. While such a progressive law may not be under consideration in every state, it's clear the

public cares deeply about animal welfare and more must be done to rein in the practices of puppy mills and their inhumane treatment of animals.

While USDA has proposed possible changes to the Animal Welfare Act Licensing Requirements, I believe further action is urgently needed. I appreciate the inspector general's proposed effort to evaluate the current status of USDA's enforcement, and I thank you for your attention to this matter of great importance to me and Californians. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

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