

Dog and Cat Data Transparency Bill

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Why the bill is needed

A decade ago, Minnesota adopted legislation to provide oversight of large-scale commercial dog and cat breeders in response to public concerns about animal welfare. But a last-minute addition to the 2014 law classified nearly all dog and cat breeder data as non-public, restricting access to critical information the law was designed to collect and disseminate. The Dog and Cat Data Transparency Bill makes this data public and requires state inspection data for licensed dog and cat breeders and nonprofit animal shelters to be posted online.

Information on state-licensed dog and cat breeders is more restricted than nearly all other state licensees

There are more than 100 state-licensed commercial dog and cat breeding businesses operating in Minnesota, and these businesses sell thousands of puppies and kittens each year. Summary data from the Board of Animal Health indicates that state inspectors issued 47 violations to licensed breeders in the last five years. But current laws prevent Minnesota consumers from seeing any meaningful data about them — including which breeders were found to have violations, the nature of those violations, or how the violations were addressed.

In contrast, consumers can easily find important information on most other licensed professionals and businesses, including nonprofit animal shelters, because the state classifies that data as public information.

Current law obscures the size of breeding operations

There are no limits on the size of dog and cat breeding operations in Minnesota. One breeder reported 885 dogs and puppies to the USDA in 2023.

Yet Minnesota consumers are limited in their ability to verify the size of breeding operations because current law restricts public access to this important information. Minnesota only licenses breeders with 10 or more intact adults that also produce more than five litters a year, but some licensed breeders create the impression they raise only a handful of puppies and kittens in their homes each year.

Buyers make significant financial investments with limited information

Puppies and kittens purchased from a breeder can cost thousands of dollars, and most breeders require a large non-refundable deposit. Often, only buyers who have paid a deposit and signed a purchase contract are allowed to meet the puppy or kitten in person — usually at the time of pick-up.



Animal Humane Society is an independent, local 501(c)(3) companion animal welfare organization. Each year AHS cares for thousands of animals in need across Minnesota.

What the bill does

The Dog and Cat Data Transparency Bill ensures that Minnesotans have access to essential information about commercial breeders, including inspection reports and population data. Making this data public and requiring breeder and shelter data to be posted online increases transparency, reduces the burden on consumers, and aligns with the current practice of most other state boards.

Protects consumers

The Dog and Cat Data Transparency Bill allows consumers to verify breeder and shelter claims about their size (number of animals), animal health, and facility conditions before making a significant financial and emotional investment in a new pet.

Establishes trust

The public has entrusted the Board of Animal Health with enforcing minimum animal health and welfare standards set by the state. Many commercial breeders advertise their BAH licensure to instill faith in their business. The Dog and Cat Data Transparency Bill will help increase trust in the BAH's oversight of large-scale breeders and nonprofit shelters by providing public access to important inspection information.

Aligns with state data transparency standards

State law has established all data collected by the state is public data — with some very limited, narrow exceptions. Public expectations of transparency within both the public and private sectors has also increased. The Dog and Cat Data Transparency Bill aligns information requirements for commercial breeders with state data practices, reflects current public expectations on data transparency, and creates the same level of transparency for breeders that is currently required for nonprofit shelters.

For more information about this legislation, visit animalhumanesociety.org/transparency

Most state boards in Minnesota publish licensing data online

25 state boards license more than 115 categories of businesses and professionals:

- 23 of those state boards publish licensee names on their website.
- 21 publish information about the type of violations licensees have incurred.
- 18 publish violation and enforcement records on their websites.
- 24 publish a public process for complaints about licensees.

None of this information is available for licensed dog and cat breeders except for the licensee's name. It's time for that to change.

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