

Dog and Cat Data Transparency Bill

2025 Minnesota Legislative Session | S.F. 1029 Westlin/H.F. 1296 Freiberg

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 around 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 66 violations to licensed breeders in the last six 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.

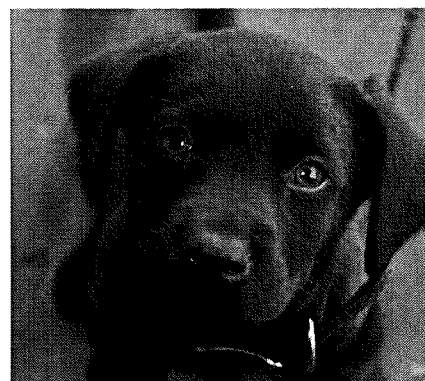
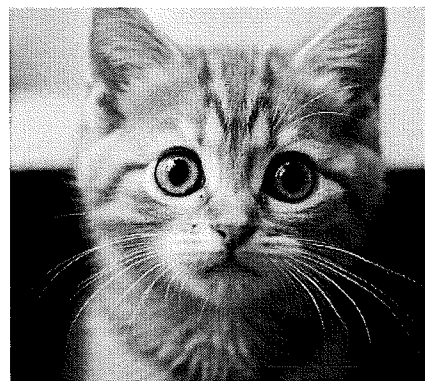
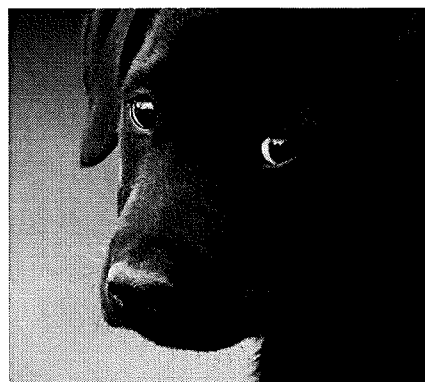
Current law obscures the size of breeding operations

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.

Feb. 2024 data



Data Practices of Minnesota State Boards

Minnesota State Board	Licensees	Licensee name on website?	Type of violation on website?	Records of violations/enforcement on website?	Complaint process/form on website?
Board of Animal Health	Commercial breeders (cats/dogs)	✓	✗ Currently classified as private	✗ Currently classified as private	✗
	Kennels, "shelters" & dealers (cats/dogs)	✗	✗ Public data, not posted	✗ Public data, not posted	✗
	3 agriculture-related businesses	✗	✗	✗	✗
Board of Accountancy	Accountants & firms	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, Geoscience, and Interior Design	12 job titles	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Barber Examiners	Barber shops & barber schools Barbers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy	Counselors & firms	✓	✓	✗	✓
Board of Cosmetology Examiners	Salons & schools Cosmetology practitioners	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Dentistry	Dentistry firms Dentistry professionals	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Dietetics and Nutrition Practice	Dietitians Nutritionists	✓	✓	✗	✓
Board of Executives for Long-Term Services and Supports	Nursing home administrators Health services executives Assisted living directors	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Marriage and Family Therapy	Therapy firms Therapists	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Medical Practice	Medical firms Physicians Physician assistants Other medical practitioners	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Occupational Therapy Practice	Occupational therapists Occupational therapy assistants	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: mn.gov websites as of 2/22/24

Minnesota State Board	Licensees	Licensee name and location on website?	Type of violation on website?	Records of violations/enforcement on website?	Complaint process/form on website?
Board of Optometry	Optometry firms Optometrists	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training	Police officers	✓ Must know license # or name	✓	✓	✓
Board of Pharmacy	Pharmacy facilities Pharmacists Pharmacy technicians	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Podiatric Medicine	Podiatric firms Prosthetists Orthotists Prosthetist-orthotists Pedorthists Assistants & fitters	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of Psychology	Psychology firms Psychology providers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Board of School Administrators	Superintendents Principals Directors of special ed programs Directors of community education programs	✗	✗	✗	✓
Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board	Ambulance services Emergency medical personnel	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gambling Control Board	Nonprofit organizations that conduct gambling Sellers of gambling equipment Distributors Bingo services	✓	✗	✗	✓
MN Board of Chiropractic Examiners	Chiropractic firms Chiropractors	✓	✓	✓	✓
MN Board of Nursing	RNs & LPNs	✓	✓	✗	✓
MN Board of Private Detective and Protective Agent Services	Private detective businesses Private detectives	✓	✗	✗	✓
MN Board of Social Work	Social worker firms Social workers	✓	✓	✓	✓
MN Board of Veterinary Medicine	Veterinary practices Veterinarians	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: mn.gov websites as of 2/22/24



March 18, 2025

Chair Putnam

Members of the Senate Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee

RE: Retrieve a Golden of the Midwest's support for SF 1029 – Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill

Chair Putnam and Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of Retrieve a Golden of the Midwest (RAGOM), a nonprofit Golden Retriever rescue organization whose main area of operation is in Minnesota. I would like to express our strong support for SF 1029, the Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill, and to request your support of this bill when it is heard in committee.

Forty percent of the people who apply to adopt from RAGOM but are not successful end up purchasing puppies from breeders. We regularly field requests from people who are trying to discern if a breeder is reputable, but because Board of Animal Health inspection reports are not accessible, there isn't a good way for consumers to determine this information. Unfortunately, many people end up buying the dog version of a lemon – a puppy who is sickly or has preventable genetic health issues which cost consumers hundreds – or thousands – of dollars in veterinary bills. Some are forced to surrender the puppy to our rescue because they cannot afford the puppy's medical costs.

The Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill provides information to consumers about the size and condition of licensed commercial dog and cat breeding businesses that is valuable to consumers. This bill makes this information easily accessible to the public by posting the breeder's name, number of animals, and inspection reports online, similar to many other industries in our state. Most Minnesota state boards publish licensing data online (25 state boards license more than 115 categories of businesses and professionals).

Currently, people who are interested in purchasing a puppy or kitten have no way of knowing if a breeder has five or 500 animals. Minnesota does not limit the size of breeding operations, and the size of licensed breeders varies greatly in the state.

A puppy or kitten often costs between \$1,000 and \$4,000 and involves a non-refundable deposit of several hundred dollars. Before making a significant financial commitment to a new puppy or kitten, consumers should have access to verified information rather than having to rely solely on the advertising claims of commercial breeders.

The proposed Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill will provide a great benefit to consumers in Minnesota. Our organization urges you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Mary McGowan, Executive Director
Retrieve a Golden of the Midwest
5800 Baker Rd #120, Minnetonka, MN 55345
www.ragom.org



March 18, 2025

Chair Putnam

Members of the Senate Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee

Chair Putnam and committee members,

I am writing on behalf of Ruff Start Rescue, a foster-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit companion animal rescue located in Princeton, MN, to express our strong support for Senate File 1029, known as the Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill. I urge your support of SF 1029 when it is heard in your committee.

Since the inception of Ruff Start Rescue in 2010, the organization has saved the lives of over 28,000 companion animals in need. We improve animal welfare in communities through adoption, education, and providing resources for people and pets.

Our organization is committed to protecting pet owners as well as their pets. The Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill provides information about the size and condition of licensed commercial dog and cat breeding businesses that is valuable to consumers. In addition, the bill makes this information easily accessible to the public by posting the breeder name, number of animals, and inspection reports online.

Right now, a person interested in purchasing a puppy or kitten cannot verify whether a breeder is raising five or 500 animals. Minnesota does not limit the size of breeding operations and the size of licensed breeders varies greatly in the state. One Minnesota breeder reported 885 dogs and puppies to the USDA in 2023.

Most consumers are also paying a premium for a purebred puppy or kitten. Costs can be as high as \$1,000 to \$4,000 dollars and involve a non-refundable deposit of several hundred dollars. Before making a significant financial and emotional commitment to a new puppy or kitten, consumers should have access to verified information rather than having to rely solely on the advertising claims of commercial breeders.

The proposed Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill will provide great benefit to consumers throughout Minnesota.

I urge you to support Senate File 1029. Thank you.

Azure Davis

Founder and Executive Director of Ruff Start Rescue

azure@ruffstartrescue.org

(612) 747-4247

3/18/2025

Chair Putnam

Members of the Senate Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee

Re: The Bond Between's support for SF 1029 - The Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill

Chair Putnam and committee members,

I am writing on behalf of The Bond Between, an animal well-being organization, located in Minnetonka, MN to express our strong support for Senate File 1029, known as the Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill. I urge your support of SF 1029 when it is heard in your committee.

The Bond Between is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that focuses on building the bond between humans and animals. We were founded in 2009 as Secondhand Hounds. Since then, we have rescued over 32,000 dogs and cats. We have grown from a rescue to a first-in-its-class animal well-being organization that provides safe shelter, proper veterinary care and daily necessities for animals while working hard to help them build a bond with humans. We also focus on supporting the bonds that already exist between people and pets with our pet food shelf, respite foster care program, and focus on social services to help prevent and mitigate animal surrenders.

Since our beginnings, The Bond Between has been built on reinforcing bonds between pets and their owners. That is why in 2024, we changed our name from Secondhand Hounds to The Bond Between. We believe that protecting humans and pet owners is just as important as protecting the animals that they love. That is why we support the Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill. No matter where an individual decides to get an animal from, it is important to have transparent information on the organization or business that they are buying from. An animal is a life-changing purchase and where someone gets their animal from is important too. This bill provides information about the size and condition of licensed commercial dog and cat breeders that is valuable to the community. It also provides an accessible way for the public to gain information by posting the breeders, name, number, number of animals and inspection reports online.

Throughout our years, we have seen the ramifications of bad breeders. Many end up in our care either after ending up in shelters or being surrendered at an emergency clinic due to their extensive medical needs. An unethical breeder can cause lasting damage to not only the dog or cat but the individuals who have purchased the animal. As of now, individuals who are hoping to purchase a new pet are not able to verify the details about certain breeders and they have no idea if they are raising five or 500 animals. Minnesota does not limit the size of breeding operations, and the size of licensed breeders varies greatly in the state. This is a huge detail that can drastically change how the dog or cat was raised and cared for prior to purchase.

Consumers' rights are important, and most are spending a significant amount of money to purchase a purebred dog or cat. Costs can be as high as \$1,000 to \$4,000 dollars and involve a non-refundable deposit of several hundred dollars. We believe that before making a significant financial

and emotional commitment to a new dog or cat, consumers should have the right to access verified information rather than having to rely solely on the advertising claims of commercial breeders who may not be the most ethical in practice. This way the dogs and cats will be better protected as will the consumers.

The proposed Dog and Cat Data Transparency bill will provide great benefit to consumers throughout Minnesota.

I urge you to support Senate File 1029. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tashina Schneider
Vice President
The Bond Between
5959 Baker Rd. Ste 390 Minnetonka, MN 55345
The Bond Between | Connecting People and Animals