

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 28, 2021

The Honorable Phyllis Fong
USDA, Office of Inspector General
Jamie Whitten Bldg, Room 117-W
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Inspector General Fong:

After reviewing the [audit](#) recently released by the Office of Inspector General (OIG), “Animal Care Program Oversight of Dog Breeders,” we request that OIG conduct a more in-depth audit to properly examine the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service’s (APHIS) oversight of dog breeders regulated under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

In the recently released report, OIG noted that they were unable to conduct a full audit due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Auditors originally planned to visit 120 dog breeding sites in 15 states, but these inspections were cancelled due to the pandemic. As a result, critical information was not obtained on whether licensed facilities are providing humane care for dogs, as well as how inspectors are carrying out inspections and whether inspectors are accurately documenting violations or adequately following up on prior noncompliance. The report notes that because of these limitations, inspectors were unable to ensure or assess breeder compliance with the AWA.

In 2010, we were pleased with OIG’s comprehensive [audit](#) to determine the efficacy of APHIS’ oversight of dog dealers. In that audit, OIG made recommendations based on its findings that the APHIS enforcement process was ineffective against problematic dealers. Given the incomplete 2021 audit, we are concerned that many of the problems identified in the 2010 audit may continue to go unaddressed, allowing problematic dog dealers to operate unchecked.

Overall, while we commend the OIG for its efforts to conduct this follow-up audit and understand the limitations imposed by the pandemic, we remain concerned about the incomplete 2021 audit. Over 2,000 dog breeders are currently licensed by USDA, and insufficient oversight could put hundreds of thousands of dogs at risk. As such, we request that once the pandemic conditions are safer, OIG conduct an in-depth examination of APHIS’ oversight of dog breeders.

Ensuring breeders are compliant with existing regulations helps ensure the health and safety of dogs in their care. We thank you for your consideration.

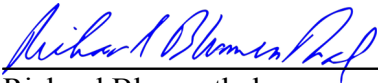
Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



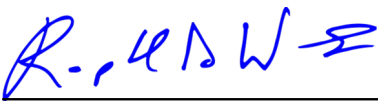
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



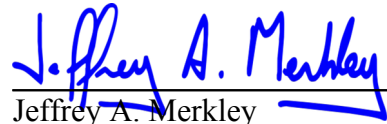
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator