

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Dog sellers program celebrates 10-year anniversary

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MADISON — In June, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will celebrate the 10-year anniversary of its dog sellers and facilities program. Over the last decade, the program has been essential to ensuring the health and welfare of dogs in Wisconsin while also protecting prospective dog owners.

“Since 2011, this program has significantly improved the lives of dogs that come into people’s homes as beloved pets,” said Dr. Yvonne Bellay, DATCP animal welfare program manager. “The state licensing and inspection regulations help ensure that required standards are maintained, and that issues at dog seller facilities are found and corrected. This process has also provided the opportunity for DATCP to work with facilities to improve their management to maintain the required standards necessary to protect human and animal health.”

DATCP’s dog sellers program establishes uniform standards of care for individuals selling dogs to the public, including dog breeders, dealers, and animal shelters. Prior to 2011, Wisconsin had no regulation of those who bred and sold dogs to the public.

Program highlights include:

- Improving the health and wellbeing of animals through disease control, required veterinary care, and education.

- Increasing consumer confidence by inspecting and licensing dog sellers.
- Offering resources and guidance to help dog sellers improve business practices.
- Licensing and inspecting nearly 500 facilities annually.
- Receiving more than 1,800 complaints since 2011, resulting in 1,100 investigations.

In 2020, despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, program staff still completed more than 300 inspections of dog seller facilities, resulting in 35 warning notices with higher compliance action taken on 12 cases. DATCP typically uses a progressive enforcement approach when addressing violations, with the goal of bringing licensees into voluntary compliance. When a facility is unwilling or unable to correct issues through education alone, DATCP may take higher level enforcement action.

Learn more about DATCP's dog sellers and facilities program at https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/DogBreedersSellersLaw.aspx.