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August 28, 2023

Secretary Tom Vilsack
United States Department of Agriculture
via AgSec@usda.gov

Administrator Kevin Shea
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
via feedback@usda.gov

Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Via public-affairs@oig.usda.gov

U.S. Department of Justice
Environment and National Resources Division
via <https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/hotline>

RE: It's time to revoke Blue Ridge Kennel's USDA license

I'm writing on behalf of international nonprofit animal protection agency Lady Freethinker to urge you to revoke the research license of BLUE RIDGE KENNEL (currently licensed as Customer # 928, Certificate # 64-R-0102), permanently shutter this facility, and facilitate the release of the suffering canines to vetted rescues and the loving homes they deserve.

This facility has been cited at least 75 times since 2015 – including 14 reported violations deemed “direct” and “critical” by your agency.

In February of this year, your inspectors filed an administrative complaint against Blue Ridge Kennels, noting numerous violations during multiple inspections from Aug. 31,

2021 through Dec. 14, 2022 — including inadequately qualified personnel, incomplete records, enclosures in need of repair, and numerous dogs in need of veterinary care — including dogs with severe tartar buildup and reddened gums, a “very thin” dog suffering from worms, a yellow Labrador with pressure sores, and a black Lab with thickened ears.

The facility also hadn’t included descriptions in their research protocol for how they planned to minimize pain or discomfort to animals in their experiments or that their findings wouldn’t duplicate previous studies, according to the complaint.

In addition to the documented violations, your federal inspectors noted that the facility “did not have enough employees to carry out the level of husbandry practices and care required to ensure the dogs’ well-being.”

But rather than reform following this warning from the USDA, Blue Ridge Kennel allowed dogs to continue suffering — with your inspectors reporting eight new violations during a single inspection in April 2023.

Lady Freethinker obtained photographs through a public records request of just some of the dogs suffering at this facility after reading reports from your inspectors about dogs with rotting teeth, open wounds, severe weight loss, and more.

We released those photographs to our readership in September 2022, and more than 41,000 Americans — outraged by the conditions — have since signed our petition, urging you to take immediate action to ensure the well-being of animals at this facility.

You can view our petition here:

<https://ladyfreethinker.org/sign-justice-for-dogs-with-rotted-teeth-and-open-wounds-at-blue-ridge-kennel/>



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It's clear, given the chronic history of multiple and serious violations, that Blue Ridge Kennel has no intention of cleaning up its act. It's therefore your responsibility — as well as your mandated duty — to ensure that the defenseless dogs at this facility are receiving the care they need and deserve.

If Blue Ridge Kennel cannot care for these animals, then it's time to revoke their license and shut them down. Everyone knows at this point that you have given them more than enough chances.

We look forward to hearing what meaningful action your agency plans to take regarding this violative research facility. You can reach me at the contact information given below.

Sincerely,

Lex Talamo
Reporter and Senior Editor, Lady Freethinker