



PENNSYLVANIA'S PUPPY BREEDING KENNELS

2025 REPORT



*Continued Neglect, Abuse, and Appalling
Conditions for Puppies in Pennsylvania*

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Background

In 2022, Lady Freethinker released its puppy mill investigative report [Pennsylvania's Unlicensed Kennels](#), which assessed public records requests of regulatory action on dog kennels in Pennsylvania from January 2016 to May 2021.

We wanted to check in on the progress, or lack thereof, Pennsylvania's dog kennels have made since 2021. We filed additional public records requests for licensed and unlicensed kennels in the state, spanning June 2021 to April 2025. We expanded our search into licensed facilities and found that a minimum of 270 kennels were cited for illegal activity spanning thirty-six counties. At least 125 of those citations were for operating a kennel without a license, including licensed facilities operating beyond the means of their existing licenses.

This updated report is a small glimpse into the horrors experienced by dogs in breeding facilities, both licensed and unlicensed, and once again serves as a reminder to adopt, not shop, when seeking a companion animal.

All photos included in this report are courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, through Freedom of Information/Right-to-Know Law requests.



Findings

Citations by the Number

Offense	# of Violations
Fail to Keep Kennel in Sanitary and Humane Condition	142
Unlawful to Operate Kennel Without License	134
Fail to Keep Proper Kennel Records	58
Owner or Operator of Kennel - Proof of Vaccination	53
Kennels: Applications, Kennels License Classifications and Fees	26
Kennel Class C: Dog Examination by Vet Every 6 Months	19
Illegal Transfer Ownership of Pup - Under 8 Weeks Old	18
Interfere With Police Officer/State Dog Warden	7
Kennel Class C: Remove Dirt/Waste at Least Daily	3
Kennel Class C: Establish Program to Control Insects	2
Kennel Class C: Housing Heated and Cooled, 50F-85F	2
Kennel Class C: Premises Clean and in Good Repair	2
Fail to Allow Official to Inspect Kennel	1
Illegal for Certain Persons to Transfer Dogs	1
Kennel Class C: Smoke Alarm and Fire Suppression	1
Kennel Class C: Clean Exercise Area	1
Kennel Class C: Entryway to Enclosure With Clearance	1
Kennel Class C: Exercise Area on Ground Level	1
Kennel Class C: No Placement Should Cause Injury	1
Kennel Class C: Exercise Area Unfettered Clearance	1
Refusal of Entry	1

The citations from 2021 to 2025 reveal that there is a significant problem with unlicensed kennels, kennels that operate beyond the bounds of their licensing type, and kennels being kept in sanitary and humane condition. Alarming, these are only the kennels and operators that were caught and cited. Pennsylvania dog wardens also give out “verbal warnings,” which are only kept on official record if done so during a kennel inspection. If wardens are following up on a complaint, the records are not kept in the public search database.



Unlicensed Facilities

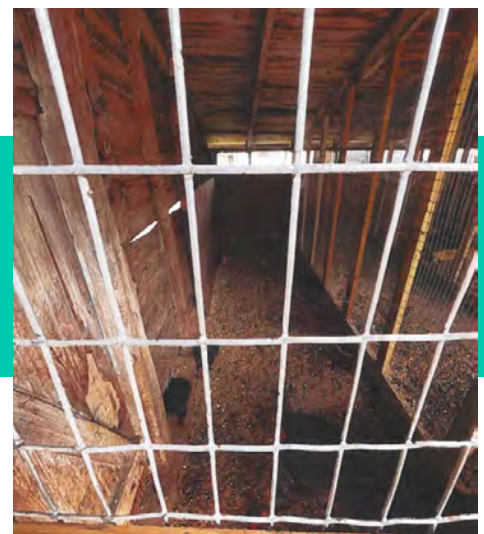
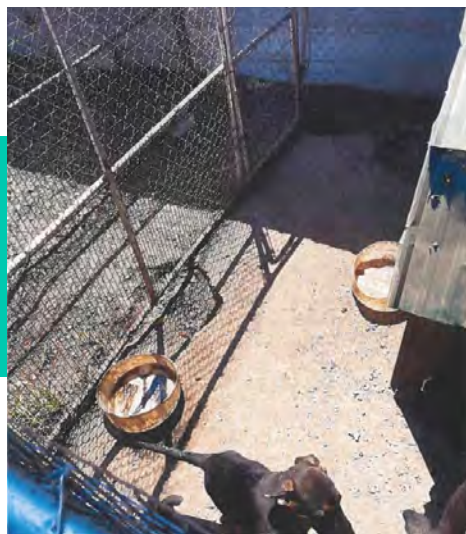
Unlicensed kennels continue to be a significant problem in Pennsylvania. In addition to the 62 different unlicensed kennels cited between 2021 and 2025, an additional 39 kennels cited for operating without a license became active license-holders only after the citation and continue to be active as of April 2025. Eleven other kennels that were cited for operating without a license have become licensed and closed “voluntarily” between 2021 and 2025. This indicates that a citation for operating without a license is not a barrier to becoming licensed later. For offenders who can pay the fines and fees associated with the citation, this does absolutely nothing to curb unlicensed facilities from operating.

The conditions of some of these unlicensed facilities, much like what was revealed in Lady Freethinker’s 2022 report, are inexcusable.

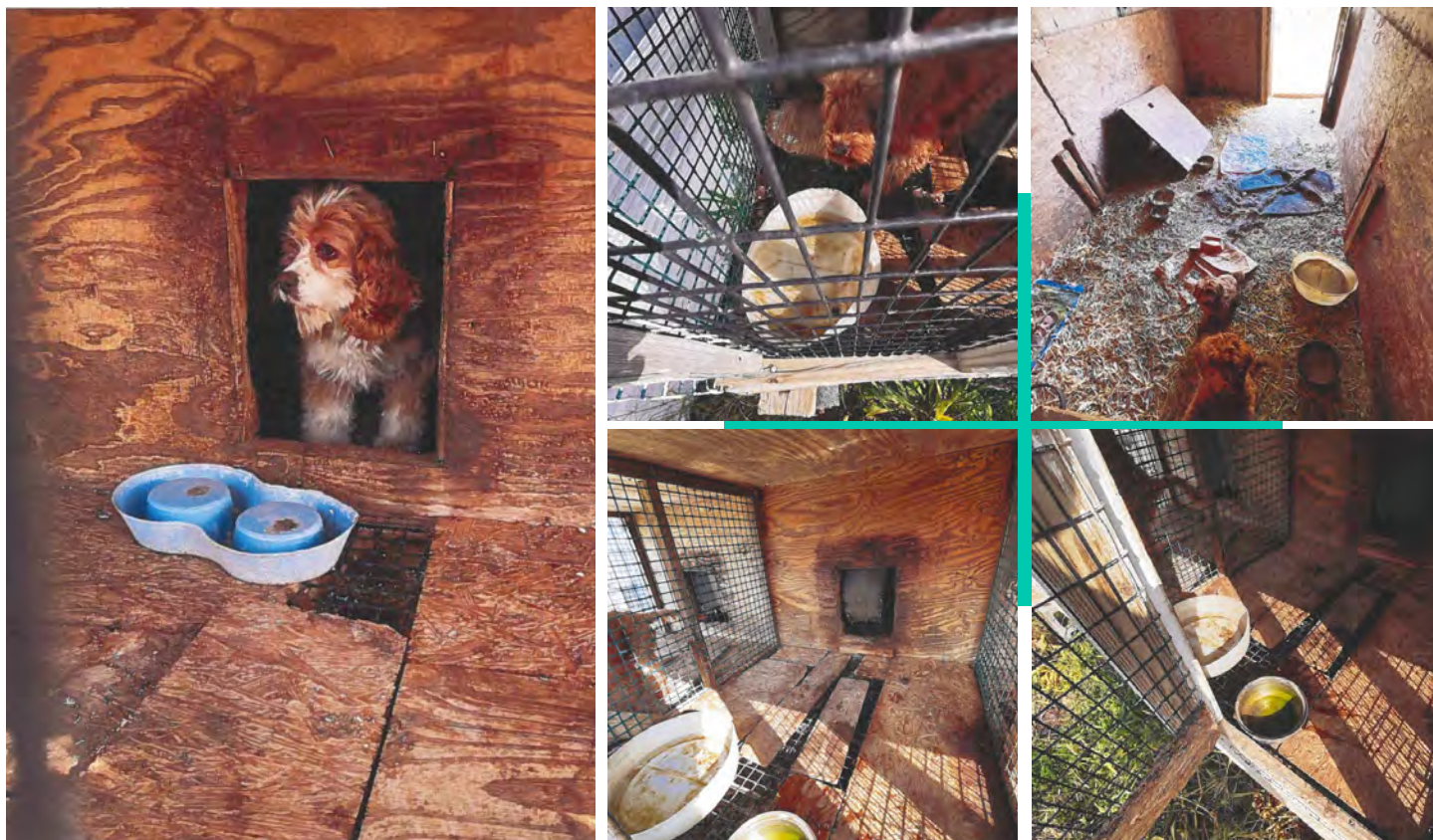
In Cumberland County, a facility selling large breed puppies online was found to be holding nine puppies in a pen where temperatures exceeded 103 degrees without adequate shelter.



The facility also lacked proper ventilation, with temperatures reaching 98 degrees in the main enclosure. The facility also failed to provide clean water to the puppies and had urine and feces throughout the enclosures.



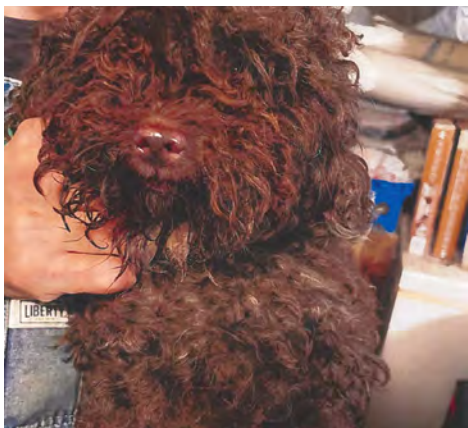
Another unlicensed facility in Cumberland County held puppies and adult dogs in dirty, plywood kennels without access to clean water.



Dog wardens were tipped off in Chester County by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) when a licensed facility received a shipment of puppies from an unlicensed facility. In addition to housing at least one sick dog, the facility lacked proper ventilation and was filled with urine and feces.



An unlicensed facility in Indiana County was discovered after a state trooper performed a welfare check on the home. Inside, dog wardens discovered no less than 35 dogs in horrific condition, with severe, painful matting and urine-soaked paws.



In Lancaster County, widely considered a hotspot for puppy mill activity, an unlicensed facility recently made headlines after the alleged killing of four puppies deemed unsellable due to the color of their fur. Four 16-to-20-week-old sheepadoodle puppies were allegedly drowned in cow manure by a breeder who advertised puppies on popular puppy selling websites.¹ Even after years of continuances by the court, and a [petition](#) by Lady Freethinker, the case is still pending at this time.

Lady Freethinker was denied records for the Lancaster case, along with at least 49 other unlicensed facilities, with the claim that records did not exist. However, a search of court cases revealed a multitude of records showing that many of the individuals cited for unlicensed facilities were also charged with animal neglect and animal cruelty. Of those found guilty or who pleaded guilty, few, if any, faced consequences that fit their crimes, with many receiving probation. Though judges are empowered under Pennsylvania law² to prohibit convicted animal abusers from owning animals in the future, it appears few judges are willing to impose this limitation, even in the stark cases highlighted in this report.

¹ Klinedinst, M. (2025, Mar 6). Lancaster County man accused of illegally euthanizing four puppies has court hearing delayed again. Fox43. <https://www.fox43.com/article/news/local/lancaster-county-man-accused-of-illegally-euthanizing-four-puppies-has-court-hearing-delayed-again-lancaster-county/521-9a1bf02f-a6f5-4d07-affe-3d62fd3e31cf>

² 18 Pa.C.S.A. §5555



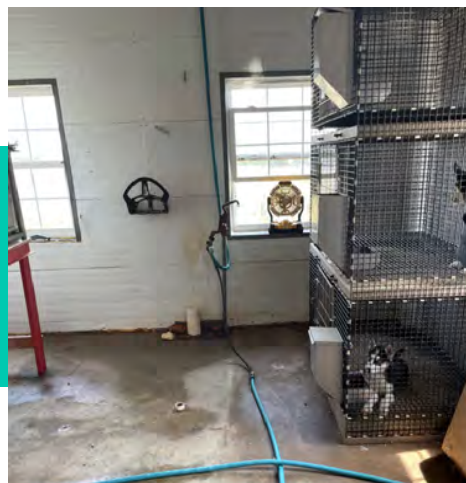
Licensed Facilities

In addition to operating beyond their licensing capacity, the conditions of some of Pennsylvania's licensed kennels are shocking. While dog wardens do cite and document problems, it appears that kennels are allowed to continue to operate regardless of significant violations that impact the health and welfare of the animals in their care.

One licensed facility in Lancaster County has been given several verbal and written warnings over the last eight years, with continued ventilation and sanitation problems continuing into at least 2024.



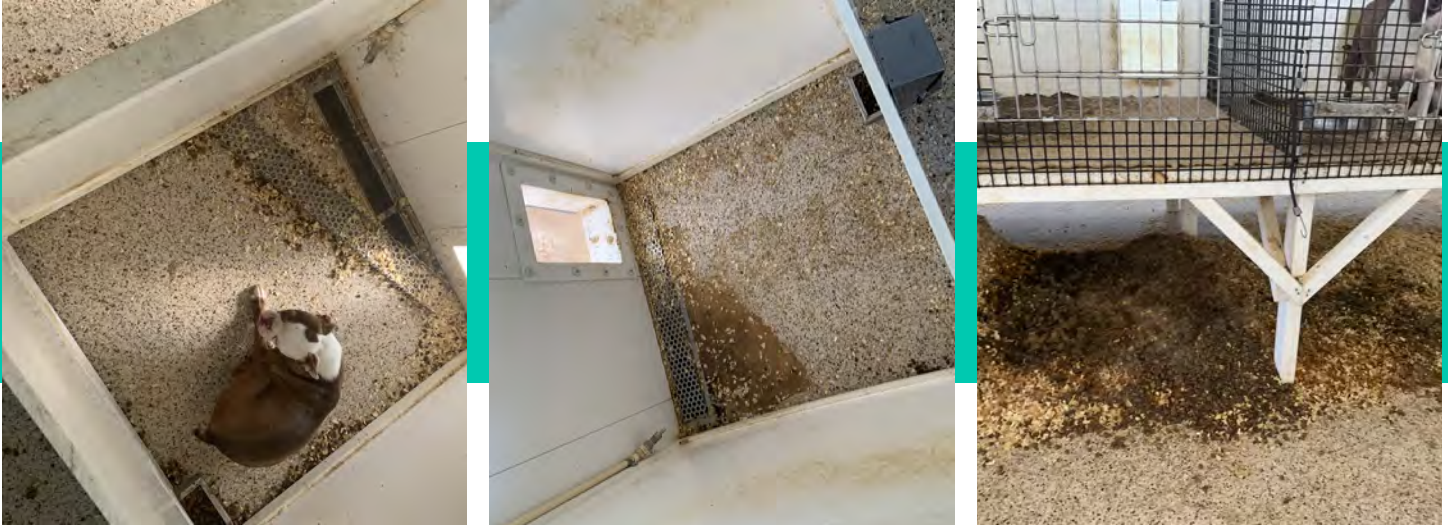
In 2024, the facility was referred for cruelty charges for keeping a husky, a dog breed accustomed to cold weather, in temperatures exceeding 89 degrees without proper ventilation.



The facility's license is still active.



Another licensed facility in Lancaster County has received numerous warnings and citations over the years for issues spanning from improper maintenance of the facility, to lack of water resistance in flooring (meaning it cannot be properly sanitized), to inadequate sanitation leading to a build-up of feces throughout the facility.



Even after being cited, the facility continued to lack proper water resistance for more than two years and inadequate sanitation up until at least 2024. The facility's license is still active.

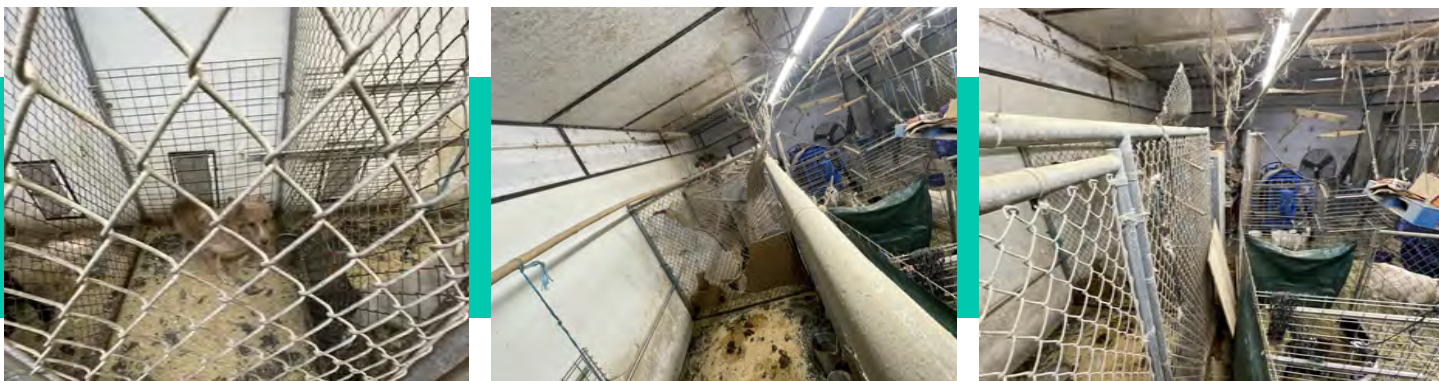
A third licensed facility in Lancaster County has received warnings and citations since at least 2017 for problems including unsealed wood that cannot be sanitized, lack of proper record keeping, lack of shelter for 10-week-old puppies, excessive build up of feces, dirt, and dead insects in the facility, and failing to have enclosures that meet minimum size requirements set by law.



Though cited again in 2025 for sanitation problems, this facility's license is still active.



In Cumberland County, a licensed facility that has been cited for failing to provide rabies vaccines has kept its dogs in what appears to be a windowless shed, with a build up of excretia and cobwebs, as well as random junk and other animals, including a goat.



Though cited in 2023 for failing to maintain its kennel in safe and humane condition, the facility's license is still active.

Adams County is home to a boarding facility that used to be a breeding facility that was warned and cited for years due to failing to maintain its facility. Failure to maintain the facility led to unsealed, rusted surfaces, disconnected fencing, excretia throughout, and dogs exposed to freezing temperatures without shelter or bedding.



It was not the state of Pennsylvania that closed the breeding aspect of the facility; it was the owners themselves, despite years of documented issues.



Call to Action

In 2022, Lady Freethinker called on Pennsylvania's dog wardens to take decisive and consistent enforcement action against unlicensed kennels and unlicensed breeders. We continue that call and expand it to licensed kennels and breeders as well. These facilities, whether licensed or not, have a duty to the animals in their care and they are failing to fulfill that obligation. If facilities cannot meet the minimum standards set by law, they should not be allowed to operate. Operators of illegal, unlicensed facilities should not be rewarded with approved applications for facility licenses and licensed facilities should have their licenses revoked for repeated violations.

We urge prosecutors and judges in the state of Pennsylvania to recognize the seriousness of animal cruelty as a crime, follow through on cases, and impose appropriate penalties. Not only is animal cruelty a threat to animals, it is a threat to humans. The link³ between the mistreatment of animals and the mistreatment of humans has long been established, with additional correlations continuing to be established between animal cruelty as a crime and other criminal activity, such as organized crime and human trafficking. Prosecutors and judges should remember the link throughout these cases, with special emphasis when looking at plea deals and sentencing. It is time to match the penalty to the crime and to put in safeguards for the future, such as prohibiting future ownership of animals after sentencing, including as a condition of probation.

Lawmakers must continue to push for laws to prevent the types of harm documented in this report. Some Pennsylvania lawmakers already are. In August 2025, Representative Jeanne McNeill re-introduced Victoria's Law ([H.B. 1816](#)), a bill that, if passed, will prevent the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits from breeding mills in pet stores.⁴ Victoria's Law is named after a 90-pound German Shepherd who spent ten years of her life in a tiny crate, being bred repeatedly despite an incurable and debilitating genetic disease. Victoria birthed more than 150 puppies before her death, all carrying the same genetic diseases that killed her. At the time of publishing, the bill has been referred to committee. Lady Freethinker encourages the passage of this bill and will continue to fight to end cruel puppy mills in Pennsylvania and beyond, regardless of the bill's outcome.

³For more information on prosecuting and adjudicating animal cruelty cases through the lens of the link, please see: [Understanding The Link: Violence to Animals and People and Animal Cruelty Prosecution: Opportunities for Early Response to Crime and Interpersonal Violence](#).

⁴Stallsmith, S. (2021, Feb 17). Victoria's Law would keep puppy mill dogs, cats, rabbits out of Pennsylvania pet stores. *York Daily Record*. <https://www.ydr.com/story/news/2021/02/17/victorias-law-would-prevent-pet-stores-buying-puppy-mills/6785003002/>

