



FAQS:

Animal Care Standards

● **AREN'T ALL DOGS AND CATS PROTECTED BY ANIMAL CARE STANDARDS?**

Unfortunately, no. Americans love their pets—there are an estimated 184 million pet dogs and cats in this country¹—but before they come into peoples' homes, all animals are not protected by the same laws and regulations. Some animals are left vulnerable to substandard treatment or neglect because consistent regulation and uniform oversight doesn't exist to make sure all pet providers care for their animals appropriately. This not only jeopardizes animal health and wellbeing; it creates human health risks as well since animals may not have been given necessary vaccinations or veterinary exams to prevent and identify the presence of zoonotic diseases.

● **WHAT RULES ARE THERE THAT PROTECT DOGS AND CATS?**

Currently, there are federal and state laws that regulate animal care by licensed and inspected dog breeders and distributors, and there are state and local laws regarding care, warranties and transparency that regulate some sources such as breeders and pet stores. But most states don't have any standards of care that animal rescues and shelters must meet—and these organizations account for nearly half of the dogs (44 percent) and cats (47 percent) that are brought into American homes as pets each year.²

● **WHY ARE STANDARDS OF CARE FOR ALL DOG AND CAT PROVIDERS IMPORTANT?**

No one wants defenseless animals to be neglected or mistreated, no matter who is responsible for their care. All pets deserve to be protected and looked after under the highest standard of care—no one who offers dogs and cats to the public should be exempt. Shelters and rescues represent the largest source—44 percent—of all dogs brought into homes each year.³ Those dogs deserve the protection afforded by regulations requiring basic care standards and record-keeping. Pet stores, the source of just four percent of dogs each year, are already highly regulated and frequently inspected in most states. It only makes sense that shelters and rescues, as trusted providers for the majority of dogs, should also be regulated, inspected and accountable for providing the highest standards of care.

● **WHAT WILL EQUAL ANIMAL CARE STANDARDS MEAN FOR DOG AND CAT OWNERS?**

Appropriate care standards and oversight don't just protect pet health and wellbeing, they also help safeguard humans from disease risks and provide peace-of-mind. Requiring all animal providers to be licensed or registered and to provide vaccinations, veterinary exams and a detailed medical history will mitigate the spread of disease, and reassure families that they are bringing a healthy animal into their home. It will also enable authorities to track the movement of animals into and across the United States. According to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report, over 1 million dogs are imported into the country each year.⁴ While the USDA requires that dogs entering the United States for resale be at least 6 months old and vaccinated for rabies and other diseases, these rules aren't always followed. In 2019, after dogs imported from Egypt tested positive for rabies,

FAQS:

Animal Care Standards

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) imposed a temporary suspension of dog imports from the country to protect public health and prevent the reintroduction of dog rabies (canine rabies virus variant), which had been eliminated from the United States since 2007.⁵

● IS ACTION ALREADY BEING TAKEN TO PROTECT DOGS AND CATS WITH EQUAL STANDARDS OF CARE?

Yes, some states have set excellent examples for protecting the health and wellbeing of animals in all pet care facilities. For example:

- Colorado's Pet Animal Care Facilities Program (PACFA) ensures that pet care facilities meet or exceed minimum standards of care, holding and record keeping. It provides that anyone who engages in selling, transferring, adopting, breeding, boarding, training, grooming, sheltering or rescuing an animal may need to be licensed with the state's Department of Agriculture.
- Wisconsin's Dog Seller and Dog Facility Operator rules regulate those that deliver pet dogs to the public, including non-profits that shelter or foster 25 dogs or more each year, dog breeders and pet stores. The state licenses and inspects these groups that are required to meet specified standards of care and provide certificates of veterinary inspection when a dog goes to an owner for sale or adoption, among other requirements.

Other states, such as Connecticut, Maine and New York, have registration requirements or animal care regulations that apply to municipal shelters and/or private rescues, but most states do not.

● WHAT IS NEEDED TO PROTECT DOGS AND CATS AND THE PUBLIC?

High quality care and appropriate government oversight should be the foundation of any organization that works with the dogs and cats who will become beloved companions. The most responsible way to protect both the dogs and cats and the people who ultimately bring them into their homes as pets is to establish appropriate standards of care and hold all pet providers accountable to them.



^{1,2,3} 2017-2018 American Pet Products Association National Pet Owners Survey. <https://www.mcldrewwyoung.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2017-2018-Pet-Survey.pdf>

⁴ USDA, Report on the Importation of Live Dogs into the United States, June 2019. https://www.naiaonline.org/uploads/WhitePapers/USDA_DogImportReport6-25-2019.pdf

⁵ CDC, Notice of Temporary Suspension of Dogs Entering the United States from Egypt, May 2019. <https://www.cdc.gov/importation/bringing-an-animal-into-the-united-states/Egypt-dogs-temp-suspension.html>