

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 16, 2022

Kevin Shea, Administrator
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Administrator Shea:

We are concerned that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has not acted to abate persistent violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) at Envigo's operations in Cumberland, Virginia, (certificate 32-A-0774, site 005 and certificate 23-R-0187, site 002) by exercising its authority to suspend Envigo's license for 21 days or following protocol to confiscate animals who are suffering there.

In July 2021, APHIS cited Envigo for 26 violations of the AWA at this site, twelve of them critical or direct. Veterinarians found 15 dogs denied treatment for "severe dental disease," wounds, yellow discharge around the eyes, and more. The facility's protocol was to deny mother dogs of food for days while nursing puppies—a practice that persisted and which facility management instructed staff to lie to federal inspectors about even after warnings by inspectors that it was inhumane and unlawful. Hundreds of dogs and puppies were caged in rooms in which temperatures reached 92.3 degrees. Envigo's own records showed more than 300 puppies' deaths were attributed to "unknown" causes and there was no effort to learn of the cause for the high mortality rate in an effort to change it. Additionally, three dogs had been killed in fights and 71 dogs had been injured by dogs in adjacent kennels. Envigo even "refused to provide full copies" of records to inspectors.

In October, APHIS staff returned to the site and found that egregious problems persisted. In another report just released, APHIS veterinarians cited Envigo for 13 more violations of the AWA, 11 of them repeat violations and seven of them critical or direct. Inspectors found that a puppy and dogs were deprived of veterinary care for an eye infection, crusted and oozing sores on the paws, and other eye and foot ailments; puppies died after falling into a drain or being trapped by the head in a cage door; and puppies' legs and feet fell through cage floors. According to the report, workers medicated dogs without consulting the facility's sole full-time veterinarian; and took no steps to prevent dogs' incompatibility, with one puppy found eviscerated in an enclosure with nine littermates and staff unaware one dog was biting and wounding another. Workers also put down nine dogs who were injured in just two months after

being pulled by a limb or tail through kennel walls by other dogs. Your inspectors found moldy feces in dog enclosures, up to 6” of feces piled in a gutter, and an “overpowering fecal odor” and “strong sewage odor” in the facility.

APHIS returned to the site in November but, for reasons we ask you to explain, has not yet made those findings public. Further, a PETA investigator who worked at Envigo for seven months recorded workers with no veterinary credentials injecting euthanasia drugs directly into puppies’ hearts without sedation, causing them immense pain; intentionally depriving nursing mother dogs of food for up to two days, including after the aforementioned warning by the USDA to cease this cruel practice; and leaving dogs soaked and shivering from water sprayed via high-pressure hoses.

[7 U.S. Code § 2149](#) (a) allows APHIS to suspend Envigo’s license for 21 days for its violations of the AWA. 9 CFR § 2.129 authorizes APHIS to confiscate animals who are suffering as a result of violations of the AWA. APHIS has recently taken these actions for animals suffering at the hands of licensees with similarly appalling records of violations. Yet APHIS has taken no action in this case to render aid to these animals or abate the violations.

This lack of timely follow-through is not what Congress intended when it entrusted APHIS with investigating these violations of federal law. Please provide my office with the not-yet-posted inspection reports of Envigo as well as a complete explanation as to when APHIS will take these and other actions to render urgently needed aid to the roughly 5000 dogs held at Envigo.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress