

11 Mozart Way
Newark Delaware 19702-3018

Dear Ms. Piche:

Thank you for your e-mail of April 8, 2006 to Secretary Johanns regarding Commercial dog breeding facilities and a dog auction in Shelbina, Missouri. From which dogs were reportedly rescued on March 18, 2006.

Our Agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) enforces the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), a law designed to protect certain animals from mistreatment. We share your concern for the welfare of animals and assure you that we work hard to ensure their protection. In enforcing the AWA, we require people who breed animals-including dogs at the wholesale level and the wholesale dealers who supply these animals to retail pet stores-to be licensed with us. We also require people who act as brokers-such as operators of auction sales-for the purchase and/or resale of dogs to be licensed. Accordingly licensees must provide their animals with veterinary care, a balanced diet, clean and structurally sound housing, proper ventilation and sanitation and protection from extremes of weather and temperature, among other things. We also require licensed breeders to employ a full-time veterinarian or arrange for a private veterinarian to make regularly scheduled visits to their facilities. If the attending veterinarian finds deficiencies in care or management practices that may be jeopardizing the health of the animals the breeder would be expected to follow the veterinarian's recommendations.

With regard to the auction in Shelbina, Missouri that you mention, an inspector with our Animal Care program, which enforces the AWA, was present and did not see any dogs in circumstances such as those you described. If you have specific information concerning suspected AWA violations that may have occurred at this event, particularly if you have evidence that someone beat and caused a head injury to a dog, we encourage you to send detailed information to our Animal Care's Western Region Office. The address is Animal Care, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA, Building B, Mail stop, 3WII, 2150 Centre Avenue, Fort Collins, Colorado 80526-8117. The e-mail address is acwest@aphis.usda.gov.

With regard to the closure of several retail pet stores in Georgia due to concerns that numerous puppies were infected by the Giardia parasite. State authorities are responsible for this investigation. However, we are prepared to work cooperatively with State authorities if they request our assistance or there is evidence that an AWA licensee, such as a commercial dog breeding facility, is the source of the parasite.

For more information you may wish to contact the Georgia Department of Agriculture. The address is Georgia Department of Agricultural, 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive SW, Atlanta, Georgia 30334.

With regard to the loans that you mention, we believe that you may be referring to rural loans administered by USDA's Rural Development program. Our Agency is not involved in reviewing or processing these loans; however, you may wish to contact _____ of USDA's Rural Development directly. The address of the national office of USDA's Rural Development is Rural Business-Cooperative Services, Rural Development USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Stop 3230, Washington D.C. 20250.

We hope this information is helpful and assures you of our commitment to enforcing the AWA

Sincerely

Chester A. Gipson
Deputy Administrator
Animal Care