

Fiscal Year 2018: Animal Care Impact Report

Animal Care is a program under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Our purpose is to:

- Ensure the humane treatment of animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act (AWA)
- Eliminate soring and promote fair competition at events covered by the Horse Protection Act (HPA)
- Provide national leadership on the safety and well-being of pets and other animals in disasters

To achieve this purpose, we work every day to build relationships with and services for our regulated communities, partners, and stakeholders, and work collaboratively within Animal Care and across USDA to promote the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of our program. We do this by providing:



Excellent customer service, including timely review of applications; responsive and courteous handling of customer inquiries and concerns; and fair and equitable inspections and review of appeals of inspection findings, public complaints, alleged violations, and comments on rulemakings



Learning opportunities to support humane animal care, including practical tips and aids, webinars, symposia, presentations at conferences and meetings, stakeholder messages, and science-based research



Quality inspections and guidance to support our regulated communities in understanding the regulatory requirements, gaining an accurate picture of their compliance status, and working through compliance issues to ensure humane animal care



Assistance for regulated facilities seeking personalized help with compliance challenges and for people and animals in disasters

A critical factor in our success is our commitment to USDA's core values. Specifically, we expect and require complete honesty and integrity in all we do. We make commitments with care and live up to them. We own up to problems and are always responsive. We provide service to our customers on time, every time. And, we guard, conserve, and preserve USDA resources the taxpayers have entrusted to us.

Annual Numbers At-A-Glance

Employs nearly 200 civil servants

Conducts over 10,000 inspections under the AWA

Inspects over 1,500 horses for compliance with the HPA

Invests more than \$400,000 to strengthen the nation's animal emergency and response preparedness

Invests more than \$100,000 to empower Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees to improve animal welfare while minimizing regulatory burdens

Provides \$15,000 to help Native American communities control populations of dogs and cats by offering free spay and neuter services

Fiscal Year 2018 Priorities

In fiscal year 2018, Animal Care initiated 72 priority projects to strengthen our customer service, hone the efficiency and integrity of our program, and enhance our emergency response capabilities. Animal Care completed 74 percent of those projects in under one year and plans to complete many of the remaining projects in 2019.

The following pages provide details on the projects completed this year, as well as program measures, spotlights, and accomplishments.



USDA’s goal is to be the most effective and most customer-focused department in the Federal government. Animal Care supports this goal by providing excellent service to its customers with timely review of applications, responsive and courteous handling of customer inquiries and concerns, and fair and equitable inspections and review of inspection report appeals, public complaints, alleged violations, and comments on rulemakings.

In fiscal year 2018, Animal Care completed nearly a dozen projects designed to strengthen its customer service by:

- Introducing a [new webpage](#) to give customers a one-stop resource for obtaining permits to import dogs for resale (including adoption), enabling Animal Care to dramatically increase the number of import permits issued for live dogs from 5 permits covering 35 dogs in FY 2017, to 568 import permits covering 2,021 dogs in FY 2018
- Expanding the [exemptions from the AWA licensing requirements](#) for small-scale dealers and exhibitors, and notifying nearly 500 licensees who may be eligible for a licensing exemption
- Providing Animal Care employees with communications training to promote productive engagement with customers and create an open environment to exchange information
- Implementing a new process to remind licensees when it is time to submit a renewal application to help avoid an inadvertent lapse in licensure, resulting in a 24 percent decrease in the number of licenses that lapse as a result of the failure to submit a timely renewal application
- Revisiting our [strategic plan](#) to align with the current administration priorities, goals, and vision

Animal Care also established standardized measures to evaluate its responsiveness to customer applications, inquiries, complaints, and appeals to ensure we are hitting the mark. You can review many of these measures below.

Meet Our Customers

6,614 Licensed Breeders, Dealers, and Exhibitors

2,062 Registered Research Facilities, Carriers, and Intermediate Handlers

164 Dog Importers

1,638 Horse Inspected for HPA Compliance

64 Managers of Horse Shows, Exhibitions, and Sales

Finally, we hosted five listening sessions at locations across the country to seek customer and public input on whether to establish new criteria for recognizing third-party inspection and certification programs when determining USDA inspection frequencies at facilities regulated under the AWA. On May 25, 2018, we [announced](#) that we would not be establishing new criteria in response to the vast majority of comments that did not support this idea.

91%

of 14,575 calls answered immediately in field offices

53

average number of days to issue AWA new license after receiving application

97%

of AWA license renewal applications processed within 5 business days

7

Average number of days to issue or update AWA registration

2

average number of days to issue 568 permits for dogs imported for resale purposes

21

average number of days to respond to complaints about animal welfare

80

average number of days to respond to appeals of inspection findings under AWA



Animal Care employs nearly 200 veterinary medical officers and other experts to support our customers in understanding and meeting the regulatory requirements.

One way we achieve this is by providing quality inspections and guidance so our customers can gain an accurate picture of their compliance and work through any compliance challenges they might be facing to ensure humane care.

In fiscal year 2018, Animal Care completed over 20 priority projects to enhance its inspections and guidance. One area of focus involved identifying consistency gaps and establishing clear guidance and training on regulatory application. To that end, we:

- Refined our new inspector training program and established checklists to ensure new inspectors have all necessary skills and knowledge prior to conducting inspections
- Provided training to all Animal Care employees on identifying, reading, and applying the regulatory requirements and administered written exams to ensure consistent identification of compliant and noncompliant conditions
- Standardized our collection of animal inventories to ensure they reflect the number and type of animals inspected, and incorporated AWA licensee and registrants into the review process to verify accuracy
- Distributed detailed [euthanasia guidance](#) to ensure alignment with the AWA regulations
- Developed and distributed [updated guidance on incentives](#) for identifying, reporting, correcting, and preventing noncompliances
- Updated our [guidance documents](#) aimed at reaching persons conducting unlicensed, regulated activities by clarifying our position on the resale of breeding dogs and exhibits that exclusively use farm animals

Another area of focus involved enhancing our communication skills to ensure the guidance and assistance we provide is as clear as possible. Beyond providing all of our employees with

Guidance and Resources

Animal Care maintains a [digital library](#) of guidance documents to help customers understand the requirements that apply to them, including tech notes, factsheets, policies, and an inspection guide.

In addition, USDA's [Animal Welfare Information Center](#) provides information and services to help research facilities with employee training and to promote the humane care and use of animals by providing information on alternatives that could reduce or replace animal use or minimize pain and distress in animals.

communications training to promote productive engagements with customers and an open environment to exchange information, we began providing facilities with copies of photographs taken during the inspection process to facilitate the discussion of the inspection findings and guide corrective action, and delivered training to our inspectors on communicating with [attending veterinarians](#), who are key partners in overseeing facilities' programs of veterinary care.

A final area of focus for our projects was to improve the consistency of USDA and industry inspections under the HPA. Specifically, we finalized revisions to our standard operating procedures, held joint training with USDA employees and Designated Qualified Persons (DQPs) that are licensed by horse industry organizations to detect noncompliances, and issued a [report card](#) on DQP performance so event managers can make informed decisions about retaining industry inspectors.

10,342

number of facilities inspected under the AWA

91%

of facilities were in compliance with the AWA during inspection

16%

reduction in attempted inspections under the AWA over fiscal year 2017

1,638

number of horse inspections conducted by USDA under the HPA

89%

of horses inspected by USDA under the HPA that were in compliance

3.6%

difference in DQPs' finding of noncompliances when USDA is present or absent

93%

increase in DQP detection of HPA noncompliances



Animal Care has long provided its customers and the public with learning opportunities to support humane animal care, including webinars, symposia, presentations at conferences and meetings, stakeholder messages, and science-based research.

In FY 2018, Animal Care created two new and exciting learning opportunities:

First, we developed a new line of non-regulatory, extension-type materials to provide quick tips and information to assist anyone who cares for animals in providing humane treatment. To date, we have posted 18 of these “[Animal Care Aids](#)” on our website on the following topics:



Canine periodontal disease and coat care



Social Needs of **Nonhuman Primates**



Bear nutrition, husbandry, veterinary care, and other topics



Special environmental needs of **Semi-Aquatic Animals**



Special environmental needs of **Mammals that Fly or Glide**

Second, Animal Care undertook a new initiative to strengthen relationships with the attending veterinarian community. Dealers, exhibitors, and research facilities employ attending veterinarians to provide adequate veterinary care to their animals and to oversee other aspects of animal care under the AWA. During inspections, our inspectors look at a facility’s written program of veterinary care and assess the animals’ health and wellbeing. From time to time, our inspectors may have a question about an animal’s veterinary care. If the attending veterinarian is not present during

ICARE Project

USDA — in partnership with the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, National Science Foundation, and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs — established the **Interagency Collaborative Animal Research Education (ICARE) project** to empower Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees and their institutions to improve animal welfare and increase compliance with federal standards while minimizing regulatory burden. Animal Care invests more than \$100,000 annually in the ICARE project.

the inspection, we have asked our inspectors to pick up the phone and call the attending veterinarian and have a conversation to help us confirm that the animal is receiving adequate care.

As part of this initiative, Animal Care established a [new webpage](#) that includes a new training video and presentation that provides an overview of the role of attending veterinarians under the AWA, and reached out to the attending veterinarian community and all regulated facilities to let them know about this new approach.

Finally, Animal Care continued to emphasize customer and public outreach by attending meetings and conferences with leaders and members of the breeder, exhibitor, research, transporter, veterinary, walking horse, and emergency response communities. During these meetings, we discuss topics of interest and our oversight role, in addition to distributing USDA publications. In February and April, we also held open clinics to help people meet the HPA standards.

36

outreach meetings and events with breeders and other dealers

13

outreach meetings and events with exhibitors

23

outreach meetings and events with research community

1

outreach event with transportation community

25

outreach meetings and events with veterinarians

6

outreach meetings and events with walking horse community

11

outreach meetings and events with emergency response community



Animal Care continues to grow its assistance programs to support regulated facilities seeking personalized help with compliance challenges and help our regulated facilities and pet owners prepare for disasters and other emergencies.

To better assist facilities facing compliance challenges, Animal Care instituted a new process in FY 2018 for Compliance Specialists to proactively reach out to facilities with repeat or critical noncompliances to offer customized support to help resolve challenges. As part of this initiative, we shifted resources to expand our compliance staff and our use of compliance tools, including calls, visits, letters, and learning materials to promote compliance at the forefront. We also reviewed facilities with open investigations to identify and reach out to those where additional compliance assistance would promote the humane treatment of animals more quickly and effectively than traditional enforcement methods (or enforcement alone). This new process is showing early signs of success. We reduced our response time for critical and repeat noncompliances from over 365 days to fewer than 60 days, and we also found that 69 percent of facilities that had repeat or critical noncompliances were compliant upon the next inspection following a compliance assistance visit.

Also in FY 2018, our staff provided assistance during multiple wildfires and hurricanes by monitoring affected areas to determine the status and needs of our regulated facilities. For example, in Hurricane Florence, Animal Care monitored the status of roughly 150 regulated facilities in 7 vulnerable states (DE, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV) and the District of Columbia. Animal Care also provided critical subject matter expertise in animal emergency management to assist in identifying resources to meet response gaps and to identify and mitigate animal issues resulting from the disasters.

In FY 2018, Animal Care supported the Zoo and Aquariums All Hazards Preparedness, Response, and Recovery (ZAHP) Center in the launch of Secure Zoo, which addresses the challenges that foreign animal diseases pose to the managed wildlife community

Saving Pets Saves Lives

Supporting animal safety and well-being during disasters and emergencies is a significant factor in ensuring the safety and well-being of people. That is why Animal Care invests more than \$400,000 each year to strengthen the nation’s animal emergency response and preparedness, and works closely with other agencies, our customers, and the public to protect people and animals during disasters.

through mitigation, protection, response, and recovery efforts. The ZAHP also invited proposals and micro-grant reimbursement for preparedness projects and helped facilitate a grassroots effort in Texas to build a more standardized emergency response model in the regulated exhibitor community. ZAHP maintains regular contact with the exotic animal industry, sharing preparedness information and assisting in coordination of response activities during disasters.

Finally, in support of USDA Agricultural Research Service’s (ARS) efforts to promote animal welfare and establish the fully functioning Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees at its research facilities, Animal Care established quarterly meetings with ARS officials to discuss the compliance status of ARS facilities while enabling research that meets public expectations for animal care. Animal Care identified no noncompliance during unannounced inspections of ARS facilities in FY 2018.

1,593

license and registration applications sent

521

courtesy visits made to AWA regulated facilities

178

calls offering compliance assistance made to AWA regulated facilities

11

letters offering compliance assistance sent to AWA regulated facilities

67

compliance assistance visits made to AWA regulated facilities

69%

of AWA regulated facilities in compliance after a compliance assistance visit

44

official warnings sent under the AWA