Inspection Report Appeals Process

Animal Care Tech Note

Inspection Report Appeals Process

Animal Care, a part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), conducts inspections to assess whether dealers, exhibitors, research facilities, intermediate handlers, and carriers are in compliance with the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and its regulations and standards. The following information is a quick reference for these facility operators on the process for appealing an inspection report.

Overview

An appeal is a request from an AWA licensee or registrant to Animal Care to reconsider all or part of the content of an inspection report. Licensees and registrants may appeal content in the inspection report that they believe is incorrect, does not consider relevant facts, or is inconsistent with the applicable AWA regulations or standards.

The appeals process provides an objective and thorough way for Animal Care to review any disagreements about the content of an inspection report, without fear of retaliation on the part of the licensee or registrant. The process can also lead to a better understanding of the AWA and its regulations and standards among licensees and registrants and help promote compliance through information-sharing.

Appeals Process

If you’re an AWA licensee and/or registrant, here’s what to expect in the appeals process:

- During an inspection, if a USDA inspector observes conditions that are not in compliance with the AWA and regulations and standards, the inspector will document their observations and professional assessments on an inspection report and explain them to you. We encourage you to visit with your inspector about questions involving the inspection or the content of the report during the course of the inspection and/or during the exit briefing. If a question involves potential changes to the content of the inspection report, the inspector may modify the inspection report or leave it as originally written, as appropriate.

- If you and the inspector are unable to resolve concerns about the content of an inspection report, or if you decide to appeal all or part of the content of the report, you’ll need to send a detailed, written appeal to USDA Animal Care. The written submission should clearly state the content of the inspection report you are appealing and include any documentation or other information in support of the appeal. Animal Care must receive this appeal within 21 days of you receiving the report from the inspector. We will not consider any appeals received after the 21-day period.

- An appeals team will review the appeal. The team consists of a Director and/or Assistant Director of Animal Welfare Operations, a Supervisory Animal Care Specialist, and a staff veterinarian or other subject matter expert (based on the specific details of the appeal). If an assigned appeals team member has a conflict of interest, a new member will be assigned in their place.

- Within 30 days of receiving an appeal, the team will either respond to the appeal or request more information from you. After concluding its review, the appeals team will notify you of any revisions made to the content of the inspection report or the reasons why the content of the inspection report was not revised based on the appeal.

For More Information

If you have questions about this process, or if you’re a licensee or registrant seeking to file an appeal, contact us:

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