



November 30, 2023

Jodi Lovejoy, D.V.M.
Director of the Commercial Dog Breeder and Broker Program
Indiana State Board of Animal Health

Sarah Simpson
Director of Legal Affairs, Licensing, and Enforcement
Indiana State Board of Animal Health

Bret D. Marsh, D.V.M.
Indiana State Veterinarian
Indiana State Board of Animal Health

Via e-mail: jlovejoy@boah.in.gov; sasimpson@boah.in.gov;
bmarsh@boah.in.gov (without exhibit) and overnight delivery (with exhibit)

Dear Dr. Lovejoy, Ms. Simpson, and Dr. Marsh:

We're writing to respectfully request that the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) inspect and investigate The Veterinarians' Blood Bank (VBB), a commercial dog-breeding facility managed by Debbie L. Sweany (registration number CB00002T) and owned by Drs. Darren D. Bryant and Ron E. Harrison. VBB operates sites at 3849 SR-135 near Vallonia (a dog-breeding facility) and 1851 W. County Rd. 600 N. near Brownstown (a cat-breeding facility). We ask that BOAH take urgent action to protect animals at VBB—and critically ill and injured animals across the nation given transfusions of their blood—and pursue vigorous enforcement action for any and all violations of Indiana's commercial dog breeder and broker laws, IC 15-21 *et seq.*

Attached is a declaration from an eyewitness who worked at VBB, referencing video footage and photographs that she captured there. (*See* USB drive, Exhibit 1.) Beginning on April 24, 2023, the eyewitness saw and documented that VBB and its staff did the following:

- Confined dogs to kennels with hard, grated plastic floors that caused injuries, including to the animals' feet and legs
- Failed to ensure that dogs housed in the same primary enclosures were compatible, resulting in fights and injuries
- Housed a male dog with an intact female dog in estrus—not for breeding purposes—which resulted in severe injury to the male dog's penis
- Failed to remove excreta from dog kennels and cat enclosures daily
- Failed to have a sufficient number of adequately trained employees to carry out the level of husbandry practices and care required by law
- Kept dogs in rusted kennels with paint peeling from the walls—surfaces that can't be easily sanitized

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

Washington
1536 16th St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles
2154 W. Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90026
323-644-PETA

Norfolk
501 Front St.
Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-PETA

Info@peta.org
PETA.org

Entities:

- PETA Asia
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- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

All the above appears to violate IC 15-21-4-1(a), which states that commercial dog breeders “shall comply with the standards of care set forth in 9 CFR 3.1 through 9 CFR 3.12” (which also protect cats). VBB staff also administered rabies vaccines to animals without the direct supervision of a licensed, accredited veterinarian, in apparent violation of 345 Ind. Admin. Code 1-5-1.

PETA urges BOAH to impose the maximum civil penalties of up to \$1,000 per violation of the above commercial dog breeder regulations, seek an injunction prohibiting VBB from registering with the board as a commercial dog breeder for the maximum of three years, and seek other appropriate relief to protect the animals there, pursuant to IC 15-21-7-1.

Also detailed in the attached declaration are the eyewitness’s concerning findings regarding VBB’s blood banking and animal sourcing practices. She found that VBB—which confines nearly 900 dogs and cats and sells their blood to veterinary clinics—drew blood for sale from animals who were as old as 12 years; emaciated; sick with upper respiratory infections, bone cancer, and other ailments; and receiving various medications. VBB management also acquired animals through online ads seeking homes for them, as strays, and via other random sources—including animals with poor or, at best, unknown medical histories—to be confined so that their blood could be drawn repeatedly and sold. Subjecting sick, injured, elderly, and/or medicated animals to repeated blood draws is not only detrimental to their health and well-being but also potentially dangerous to the critically ill and injured animals who will receive emergency transfusions and depend on blood sourced from healthy animals. Veterinarians who purchase blood products also expect them to be safe and uncontaminated.

Given that BOAH has the powers, pursuant to IC 15-17-3-13(10) and (28)(a), to “[c]ontrol the ... sale ... of ... biologics ... to be used for the ... prevention [and] control ... of disease ... of animals” and to “[r]egulate the production ... and distribution of products derived from animals to control health hazards that may threaten ... animal health,” we also urge your agency to immediately prohibit VBB from selling blood products until a thorough veterinary exam—by a veterinarian unaffiliated with VBB—is performed on every animal confined to its two facilities, to determine whether taking and selling their blood is a threat to their health and that of the recipients of products made from this blood.

The eyewitness is available for an interview upon request. She will testify to the facts in her declaration and verify that she captured the referenced video recordings and photographs. I can be reached at 757-581-7442 or SarahD@peta.org. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let me know if we can assist in any way.

Sincerely,



Sarah Deffinger
Senior Evidence Analyst
Cruelty Investigations Department