



Support Goldie's Act (H.R. 349)

Goldie's Act has strong bipartisan support. It was introduced in the 119th Congress by Representatives Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Chris Smith (R-NJ), and Zach Nunn (R-IA). In the 118th Congress, it was introduced in the House by the same Representatives and in the Senate by Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Rick Scott (R-FL).

Goldie's Act Overview

At any given time, hundreds of thousands of vulnerable animals are languishing in U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-licensed facilities, such as puppy mills. Although the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) was designed to protect these animals, the USDA is failing to enforce even its most basic provisions, like ensuring animals have clean food and water, clean and safe housing and veterinary care. This lack of enforcement emboldens violators and leaves animals to suffer and die.

Congress can fix this problem by passing the bipartisan Goldie's Act, which would strengthen the agency's enforcement of the AWA to better protect animals in federally licensed, commercial facilities, including dogs in puppy mills.

Why We Need Goldie's Act

The USDA's failure to enforce the AWA continues to result in animals suffering and dying in USDA-licensed facilities, such as dogs in puppy mills. The USDA routinely observes animals suffering in facilities it licenses, including dogs with untreated diseases and injuries, emaciated dogs, dogs left in extreme hot or cold temperatures and dogs living in small and filthy cages. Yet, even in the face of such cruelty, the USDA rarely utilizes its available enforcement tools, like removing animals, issuing fines and penalties, suspending or permanently revoking a license.

The USDA's failure to enforce the law is long-standing and systematic. Audits from the USDA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) and recent reports from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) document the agency's persistent failure to adequately enforce its own laws and regulations. The government has acknowledged these enforcement problems for decades. In fact, thirty years of OIG audits chronicle the USDA's poor enforcement of the AWA. The OIG's most recent 2025 report states that "APHIS' inconsistent and untimely inspections may have contributed to the dog breeders' continued violation of AWA requirements. As a result, the licensed dog breeders' pattern of continued noncompliance ... poses a threat to the well-being and safety of their dogs, leaving them vulnerable to neglect, mistreatment, and suffering."

Despite the USDA's acknowledgement that inspections are its main mechanism for enforcing the AWA, facilities go years without inspections, and violations frequently go unreported. Evidence shows that many USDA facilities operate for years without a single inspection, allowing animal suffering to go undetected. In 2024, for example, the USDA oversaw more than 17,500 licensees and registrants but only conducted 6,300 compliance inspections. When inspections do happen, USDA policies direct inspectors not to document certain violations.

Furthermore, under the AWA, the USDA has the authority to issue penalties, including temporarily suspending or permanently revoking, — subject to a hearing — a license. However, the agency's overwhelming response to violations is to do nothing. In FY2024, more than 330 dog dealers had documented violations, yet the agency took action against only three.

USDA policies and practices burden state and local law enforcement and the animal welfare community. The USDA repeatedly fails to inform state and local law enforcement of suspected cruelty. By the time these agencies are made aware, the violations have spiraled out of control, leaving law enforcement and the animal welfare community shouldering the immense burden of conducting rescue operations.

What Goldie's Act Does

Goldie's Act would strengthen the USDA's enforcement of the AWA to address and correct enforcement problems that continue to jeopardize hundreds of thousands of animals around the nation. Specifically, the bill would require the USDA to:

1. Inspect licensed facilities with reliable frequency rather than permitting facilities to go years without a single inspection.
2. Document all violations on inspection reports to ensure that each facility's compliance with the law is accurately recorded.
3. Assess each violation for a penalty to deter repeat violators and ensure that other licensees are not emboldened.
4. Remove animals found suffering because of a licensee's failure to comply with the law.
5. Timely inform state and local law enforcement of AWA violations within their jurisdiction so that law enforcement can investigate potential animal cruelty and take appropriate action.

Who Supports Goldie's Act

Eighty-eight percent of the American public want their members of Congress to support Goldie's Act, according to a recent poll. They are joined by more than 150 national, state and local organizations ranging from law enforcement and animal control to shelters and rescues:

- National Sheriff's Association
- Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association
- Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
- National Animal Care and Control Association
- The ASPCA
- Animal Welfare Institute
- Animal Legal Defense Fund
- Best Friends Animal Society

Who was Goldie?

In a USDA-licensed dog-breeding facility in Iowa, a young Golden Retriever suffered without fresh food, water or veterinary care. She lived and died in filth, and she never experienced a safe, loving home. She was even denied a name: the breeder who owned her merely referred to her as Golden Retriever #142. We remember her as Goldie.

Goldie was one of hundreds of dogs kept in horrific conditions by this breeder. USDA inspectors observed Goldie's deterioration month after month. They had the authority to help her, but the USDA failed to act. Shockingly, her story is not unique. This is why we are calling on Congress to pass Goldie's Act.



If you have questions or would like additional information, please email Daniel Leonardini at Daniel.Leonardini@aspc.org or Brynae Riggins at Brynae.Riggins@aspc.org.