
Board of Animal Health Oversight of Dogs and Cats

Project Description

June 2026

BACKGROUND

Statutes charge the Board of Animal Health (BAH) with protecting the health of Minnesota's domestic animals, including dogs and cats. To fulfill this responsibility, the board conducts several activities, including overseeing kennels and commercial dog and cat breeders, investigating animal diseases, and monitoring information about dogs and cats that enter Minnesota.

BAH is responsible for licensing and regularly inspecting kennels and commercial dog and cat breeders. Kennel facilities take dogs and cats that have strayed or been impounded, abandoned, or surrendered by their owner. Commercial breeders breed dogs or cats for sale and have 10 or more breeding animals that produce more than five litters per year. In Fiscal Year 2025, there were 88 licensed kennels and 78 commercial dog and cat breeders in Minnesota.

BAH also seeks to ensure that dogs and cats entering Minnesota meet certain health requirements. Generally, dogs and cats imported into Minnesota must have a certificate of veterinary inspection that includes details on the animal and certain vaccine information, among other information. According to BAH, in 2025 more than 19,000 dogs and cats were imported into Minnesota.

In addition, BAH is involved in efforts to address diseases that affect or may be carried by dogs and cats. For example, the board has recently responded to cases of rabies, canine brucellosis, and influenza, among other diseases involving dogs and cats.

EVALUATION ISSUES

1. How well has BAH protected the health of dogs and cats in Minnesota?
2. How does Minnesota's approach to regulating and overseeing dogs and cats compare to that of other states?

DISCUSSION

To evaluate board activities, we will review legal requirements and board data. We will analyze outcomes of kennel and commercial breeder inspections and actions the board took to correct inspection issues. We will also review a sample of inspection files. Additionally, we will review board data on efforts to address diseases involving dogs and cats, and the numbers of dogs and cats entering Minnesota.

To learn more about board processes, we will interview BAH staff and inspectors involved in overseeing kennel and commercial breeder facilities, and responding to diseases. We will also shadow inspectors to observe the inspection process at commercial breeders and kennels.

To compare how Minnesota and other states approach regulating and overseeing dogs and cats, we will review legal requirements from a selection of other states. We will consider the entities other states regulate and the oversight activities they complete.

This evaluation is scheduled to be completed in Winter 2026. For additional information, contact Stephanie Besst, evaluation manager, at 651-402-4209 or Stephanie.Besst@state.mn.us.