



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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PET SHOPS AND IMPORTED ANIMALS

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You asked a series of questions related to pet shops and imported animals. The questions and answers follow below.

Q1. *What are animal importers and what requirements does the law place on them?*

The law defines an “animal importer” as someone who brings a dog or cat into Connecticut from another sovereign entity to offer the animal for sale, adoption, or transfer in exchange for any fee, sale, voluntary contribution, service, or other consideration. It includes any commercial or nonprofit animal rescue or adoption, humane relocation, or delivery organization that is not otherwise required to be licensed under state law (CGS § [22-344\(e\)\(3\)](#)). Importers often bring animals to Connecticut from out-of-state breeders.

Among other things, the law requires animal importers to (1) annually register with the Department of Agriculture (DoAG) before importing any dog or cat into the state and (2) notify DoAG and local zoning officials before offering the animals for sale, adoption, or transfer (CGS §§ [22-344\(e\)\(1\) & \(2\)](#)). But the law’s registration and notice requirements do not apply to an animal importer who offers a dog or cat for sale to a state-licensed pet shop, if the animal is delivered directly to the pet shop (CGS § [22-344\(e\)\(4\)](#)).

Additionally, animal importers must, within 48 hours after importing a dog or cat into the state and before offering it for sale, adoption, or transfer, and every 90 days until the transaction is complete, have a state-licensed veterinarian examine the animal. The importer cannot sell, transfer, or give an imported animal up for adoption unless a state-licensed veterinarian examined it within 15 days before the transaction and issued the importer a certificate attesting to the animal's good health. The importer must maintain records of the veterinarian services for three years after they were rendered (CGS § [22-344f](#)).

Q2. Does the state record the number of dogs and cats that animal importers bring into the state for sale to pet shops? If so, what information must the state record, and how many dogs were imported for sale to pet shops in Connecticut from 2010 to 2013?

No, the state does not record the number of dogs and cats that animal importers bring into Connecticut for sale to pet shops, according to DoAG. As a result, we cannot determine how many dogs were imported for sale to pet shops from 2010 to 2013.

Q3. Does DoAG collect and retain records on out-of-state breeders from which pet shops purchase dogs or cats?

Yes, every time a pet shop sells a dog or cat, the shop sends DoAG a "certificate of origin," which includes information on the breeder or broker involved. DoAG retains these certificates for three years.

Q4. How many complaints have been filed with DoAG against pet shops for each year from 2010 to present? What was the nature of the complaints? How many were related to sick or defective animals, and what species were those animals? Which pet shops received the most complaints and what breeders supplied those animals?

From January 1, 2010 to July 9, 2013, DoAG received a total of 129 complaints against pet shops: 42 in 2010, 41 in 2011, 26 in 2012, and 19 so far in 2013. The complaints generally related to pet shops operating without a license, poor conditions, failure to maintain paperwork, animal cages being too small, and sick animals. Thirty-seven (29%) of the 129 complaints were related to sick or defective animals, including puppies, kittens, birds, hamsters, and rabbits.

The two pet shops receiving the most complaints were The Dog House in Manchester and American Breeders in Danbury. DoAG communicated to us that it does not currently have staff available to research the certificates of origin to identify the specific breeders involved in those complaints.

Q5. Does DoAG advertise (e.g., with public service announcements) that the public can file a complaint concerning pet shops with the department?

No, DoAG does not advertise this fact. However, pet shops must post consumer notices regarding the state's pet lemon law (CGS § [22-344b\(b\)\(2\)](#), see Question 8 below). These notices include information on how to contact DoAG.

Q6. How often does DoAG inspect pet shops and what records does it review?

DoAG officers inspect pet shops annually, or sooner upon complaint. The officers review health certificates, medical log books, and certificates of origin.

Q7. Are pet shops required to take dogs and cats to a veterinarian within a certain period of time after their arrival at the shop?

Animals must be seen by a veterinarian within 72 hours after arrival, according to DoAG. By law, pet shops must have dogs and cats examined by a state-licensed veterinarian before offering the animals for sale and then every 15 days thereafter that they are in their custody (CGS § [22-344b\(a\)](#)).

Q8. What is the state's pet lemon law, and does it require pet shops to report to DoAG the number of dogs returned to them due to illness or the reimbursement they have paid out for veterinarian bills?

The "pet lemon law" requires pet shops to replace or refund the purchase price of a dog or cat that (1) within 20 days after the sale, becomes ill or dies of an illness that existed at the time of sale or (2) within six months after the sale, is diagnosed with a congenital defect that adversely affects its health. It also allows consumers to request reimbursement of up to \$500 for veterinarian expenses without having to return the animal (CGS § [22-344b\(b\)](#)).

The law does not require pet shops to track and report the number of dogs returned due to illness or the amount of reimbursed veterinarian expenses.

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