



Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737

April 11, 2018

Dear Licensees and Registrants,

USDA Animal Care is exploring the value of incorporating *announced inspections* into our operational toolkit to determine if varied inspection approaches improve Animal Welfare Act compliance rates. We will soon be piloting a project involving *announced inspections* to assess whether we can make better use of our inspection resources while also improving the humane treatment of regulated animals.

Currently, we conduct routine, *unannounced inspections* of every entity regulated under the Animal Welfare Act to see first-hand how each facility is complying with the federal regulations and standards. These inspections generally occur during normal business hours, Monday through Friday. We also allow our inspectors to coordinate *optimal hours* for inspection for those facilities not regularly open to the public.

Our pilot project will explore if there are certain situations involving certain facilities in which notifying a facility of an upcoming inspection actually improves the efficiency of our inspection program and improves the humane treatment of animals. Our internal research has shown that other regulatory bodies have used a combination of *unannounced* and *announced inspections* to maximize facility compliance.

To be perfectly clear, we have no intention of eliminating *unannounced inspections*. Rather, we will be running our pilot project at select facilities to look at the potential benefits of blending *unannounced* and *announced inspections*.

One such benefit of an *announced inspection* is that it will allow a facility to have its attending veterinarian present for our compliance inspection, which will enhance communication and collaboration. Additionally, *announced inspections* will allow us to coordinate with facility operators to establish optimal hours of inspection and back-up plans for allowing us the access we need, which may significantly decrease the number of *attempted inspections*.

At this point, we have not made a final decision about using *announced inspections*. This project will merely determine if *announced inspections* have a useful place in our repertoire.

Thanks for the opportunity to share this update.

Sincerely,

Bernadette Juarez
Deputy Administrator
USDA, APHIS, Animal Care

USDA Animal Care. Ensuring humane treatment. Serving people. Doing right.