



Department of Agriculture, Trade
and Consumer Protection

Division of Animal Health
Standard Operating Procedure

SOP #	501
Revision #	New
Original Implementation Date	March 12, 2017
This Revision Implementation Date	March 12, 2017

Page # 1 of 3

SOP Owner Bureau of Field Services Director Approval

W. Johnson

Complaint Review and Screening

Purpose

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to provide guidance for handling and screening complaints received by the Division of Animal Health.

Background

The division receives hundreds of complaints every year regarding potential violations of the statutes and administrative rules that we regulate. In order to ensure that all complaints are handled in a uniform manner and receive a timely and adequate response they must be recorded in CRM and then further evaluated for content and supporting evidence.

Scope

This SOP applies to and shall be adhered to by any employee of the division who screens, evaluates and determines final actions to be taken on a complaint.

Definitions

- "Department" and "DATCP" means the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- "Division" and "DAH" means the Division of Animal Health within the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- "CRM" means Customer Relationship Management and is the application used by the Department to manage licenses, cases, complaints, etc.
- "CA" means a compliance action in CRM
- "CT" means the DAH Case Tracking database

Responsibilities

- The Regulatory Specialist will be the primary complaint reviewer for the division. They may also train and utilize additional staff (at the discretion of their supervisor) to serve as complaint reviewers.
- Complaint reviewers will review complaint information to determine the most fitting disposition. This will include creating and updating records in CRM.
- Program staff act as an informational resource to the regulatory specialist as needed.



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Page # 2 of 3

This Revision
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Procedure

1. **Initial Review**- Review the complaint in full, including any documentation, photos or videos that have been submitted. Consider the following:
 - a. What are the alleged violations, do we have authority over them?
 - b. What documentation or evidence would support or refute the claim and which of the involved parties would hold that evidence?
 - c. Is there any evidence available to substantiate the complaint, and/or does the complaint contain sufficient detail to support the allegations being a violation. For example; Feces build up in pens appeared to multiple days' worth and the ammonia smell was overwhelming vs. the facility was dirty.
 - d. What role does the complainant play in observing the alleged violation, direct observation, heard if from a friend, saw it on Facebook?
 - e. Given the information provided do there appear to be additional violations beyond what the complainant alleges?
 - f. Who is the respondent?
 - i. Do they hold a current license, registration or certificate with the division? Have they had any of the above in the past?
 - ii. If they're not licensed and suspected of operating without a license, have they been added to a "watch list"?
 - iii. Do they have any prior complaints, case history or enforcement actions?
 - iv. If licensed, when was their last inspection?

****Animal Welfare complaints will be followed up on as soon as possible but within 72 hours of receipt of complaint. If initial contact with the complainant reveals that there may be violations of Wis. Stat. ch. 951, the information will be immediately referred to local authorities for their consideration.**

2. **Contact with complainant**- After the complaint is reviewed the complainant will be contacted as soon as practical. Contact with the complainant serves a few purposes.
 - a. Allows the complaint reviewer to request additional information or documentation regarding the complaint.
 - b. May provide a brief status or informational update to the complainant, i.e. we will refer their complaint elsewhere, we will be looking further info the matter and may contact them if we have additional questions, they may want to seek remedy through small claims court, etc.
3. **Additional Research**- The complaint reviewer may find it necessary to conduct additional research prior to assigning a case to field staff for investigation. Research may include determining the identity of the respondent, obtaining evidence such as advertisements, etc.



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Page # 3 of 3

SOP Owner Bureau of Field Services

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4. **Closing Complaints:** Once the complaint has been evaluated the reviewer will select the most appropriate disposition based on the [Definitions for Resolution Dispositions](#) document.
 - a. The reviewer will also complete additional steps as necessary per the disposition, such as creating CAs or cases in CT, writing and mailing disease notification letters or referral letters.
 - b. Complaints that do not result in an investigation, will contain notes as to the findings that led to the closure as needed.

5. **Contact with Program Managers-** Complaint reviewers will make contact with program managers regarding complaints if they notice trends regarding types of violations being alleged or problematic entities. Reviewers may also contact program staff for assistance in interpretation

References

[Definitions for Resolution Dispositions](#)