

## Dog Law Officials Push for Stricter Regulations

**Pennsylvania's current laws don't allow humane officers to seize dogs when kennel licenses have been revoked.**

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Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture officials are pushing for stricter legislation governing dog laws, and are citing a current case to demonstrate the need for change that would allow humane officers to remove dogs from kennels where licenses have been revoked.

Under current laws, officers can only remove dogs who appear to be in immediate danger or exhibit signs of cruelty and neglect, even if a kennel license has been revoked. On Feb. 8, 2008, authorities entered a kennel in Ephrata, Pa., and found unsatisfactory conditions that led to the seizure of two Chihuahuas – one with bite wounds and the other with a severe eye problem, agriculture department officials said.

Ervin Zimmerman, the kennel owner, continues to operate the kennel despite numerous citations and a license revocation because he has appealed, according to the Department of Agriculture. The case is pending and an administrative hearing is expected to take place in May.

“Until a final decision is made by the courts, the Department of Agriculture can only monitor the condition of the dogs and inspect kennel conditions based on current laws,” said Jessie Smith, the state’s special deputy secretary for dog law enforcement. “While waiting on the appeal process to play out, we will continue to inspect the kennel and work with the Humane League of Lancaster County [Pa.] This situation shows how our current laws and regulations regarding dogs in kennels are outdated and insufficient.”

In October 2006, Governor Rendell announced major changes to Pennsylvania’s dog law – the state carried a reputation for having poor breeding operations. Rendell proposed additional changes last month that mainly target large, commercial breeding operations and mandate a higher standard of care. The new legislation will likely be introduced in March, Smith said, after feedback from the Dog Law Advisory Board, kennel owners and individuals can be evaluated.