

## Beagle testing breeder Envigo pleads guilty to mistreatment and fined record \$35.5m

From [Amy Jones, SpeciesUnite.com](#)

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*As part of the investigation, more than 4,000 beagles bred for medical research experiments were rescued from Envigo's Cumberland County facility.*



*Kitty Block, President and CEO of the HSUS greets rescued beagles at the organization's care and rehabilitation center in Maryland. Credit: Meredith Lee/HSUS*

A company that breeds beagles and other animals for medical testing has agreed to pay a record-breaking \$35 million fine, the largest ever in an Animal Welfare Act case.

This settlement concludes a two-year investigation by the US Justice Department (USDA) investigation into the abuse of thousands of beagles at a breeding facility in Virginia that sold dogs to laboratories for experimentation.

Envigo RMSE, which owned and operated the Cumberland County breeding facility, [pleaded guilty](#) to a criminal charge of conspiracy to violate the federal Animal Welfare Act and by failing to provide adequate veterinary care and staffing.

Envigo Global Services Inc. pleaded guilty to a felony charge of conspiracy to violate the federal Clean Water Act by failing to properly operate and maintain the wastewater treatment plant at that same facility.

These first-ever federal convictions of a supplier of animals for experimentation leave Inotiv, the parent company of Envigo, facing more than \$35 million in penalties, including a \$22 million fine.

“Everyone victimized in this precedent-setting animal welfare case deserved better: the workers, the beagles, the environment and the community,” Environmental Protection Agency Assistant Administrator David Uhlmann said. “Envigo deserves every dollar of its record fine.”

Over a period of nine months, several public inspections by the USDA uncovered over 70 violations of the Animal Welfare Act at the breeding farm, leading the Department of Justice (DoJ) to file a lawsuit against Envigo.

*“We are grateful that those responsible for their suffering are being held accountable.”*

— Adam Parascandola, HSUS Animal Rescue Team

Inspectors discovered that beagles were being euthanized instead of receiving treatment for easily curable conditions; nursing mother beagles were deprived of food; the food provided was contaminated with maggots, mold, and feces; and over an eight-week period, 25 beagle puppies died from cold exposure. Additionally, other dogs sustained injuries from being attacked in overcrowded conditions.

USDA-reviewed [mortality records](#) also revealed that from January 1, 2001, to July 22, 2021, over 300 puppies died from unknown causes.

## 4,000 Beagles Rescued



*The last group of beagles removed from Envigo RMS LLC facility in Cumberland, VA, by the HSUS. Credit: Meredith Lee/HSUS*

In 2022, as part of the investigation, the DoJ secured the surrender of [over 4,000 beagles](#) from Envigo's Cumberland County breeding facility and worked with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to facilitate the adoption of the animals.

Over a span of 60 days, the animal advocacy organization relocated the dogs from the breeding farm to shelters, working with over 120 shelter and rescue partners to help the beagles "find loving homes."

"While these beagles have since settled into loving homes, the news of the resolution brings back poignant memories of meeting them for the first time two years ago," said Adam Parascandola, vice president of the HSUS Animal Rescue Team. "For several long and hot days, our team helped assess the thousands of dogs in the facility as we assisted with the search warrant. We were able to bring approximately 445 dogs and puppies to safety that week, and in the weeks that followed, we held our breath hoping for a new beginning for the nearly 4,000 beagles remaining in the facility.

"It was an incredible relief and honor for all of us when the DoJ asked us to come back and rescue the remaining dogs, and we are grateful that those responsible for their suffering are being held accountable," Parascandola added.

Several of the puppies found homes with notable figures, such as Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, and Prince Harry, as well as New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy.

## Years of Animal Cruelty

The facility has a long history of abuse. In 2021, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) carried out a seven-month undercover investigation into animal mistreatment. Their findings included nursing female dogs being denied food, puppies having needles inserted into their skulls, and dogs being soaked with high-pressure hoses. The Norfolk-based animal rights organization celebrated the conviction.

“The U.S. Department of Justice relied on PETA’s undercover investigation evidence, and we thank the agency for its thorough investigation and tenacity in holding Envigo accountable for depriving famished mother dogs of food, cruelly killing puppies, and pressure-hosing caged animals with cold water,” says PETA Senior Vice President of Cruelty Investigations Daphna Nachminovitch. “Envigo executives chose to collect more than \$11 million off 10,000 beagles’ misery, rather than addressing systemic violations they knew about, and criminal charges for them and others responsible for the cruelty in Cumberland must be next.”

In addition to Envigo RMS’s now-closed Cumberland facility, Inotiv owns multiple companies and facilities that breed animals for use in research and operate numerous animal testing laboratories.

Animal advocates say that the company has continuously demonstrated disregard for animal welfare - last year, news broke that Inotiv was again under federal investigation after prosecutors charged several employees of Inotiv’s main supplier of monkeys with involvement in a criminal conspiracy to illegally bring wild long-tailed macaques into the U.S.



*A rescued beagle at the HSUS care and rehabilitation center in Maryland. Credit: Meredith Lee/The HSUS*

## An Abusive Industry

Each year, tens of thousands of dogs bred for experimentation in the United States are born at specialized breeding facilities. Of these, 60,000 are sent to laboratories where they may be injected, force-fed, or made to inhale toxic substances for months to test the safety of pesticides or drugs.

Others undergo surgeries to simulate severe conditions such as heart disease or to have some of their organs removed or damaged. Most are typically euthanized once they are no longer needed.

As well as causing immense levels of suffering, animal testing is bad science. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) admits that 95 percent of animal tests fail to translate to humans because the results are dangerous or ineffective.