

AJ's Angels, Inc.

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My name is Angie McDuffee, I am the proud owner of AJ's Angels Inc. which is a large commercial breeding facility in Minnesota. I am writing today to testify on how this bill can affect mine and other people's lives negatively.

Let me first tell you a little more about myself. I am 40 years old and have been working in the commercial dog breeding business for almost 18 years. When I was younger my family was huge into pets of all different sorts from horses to rabbits! My mother and father raised us to always take the best care of our animals because they cannot care for themselves. Our father would make sure that our animals' chores were properly done before dinner, if they were not done, he would hold off on dinner so that we would finish them properly. He would always say, "The animals are hungry and waiting, therefore, you will wait to eat as well until your chores are done. They depend on you." At that time, being a child, we were not quite sure why we could not eat before we fed our animals, but as we got older, we understood. If you are going to have an animal, they always come first for caring and welfare, as a parent does for their own child. That was one of the amazing lessons in life that our parents instilled in us.

At the age of 22 trying to find my place and passion in the workforce I ended up running into an ad that was looking for an animal caretaker. I thought this just may be my calling after all the years of trials and tribulations of places of work that just were not a fit for me. After the interview I was offered the job! All I knew about the job was that it was working with dogs and puppies and who would not want to play with dogs and pups all day! On my first day, another employee at the time had said to me, "Angie, when you walk through these doors you will see a lot of dogs that are excited to meet you!" I was not sure what she meant until I walked in and saw all the dogs and how happy they were! I fell in love right at that time with my new job, it was not just a job anymore it was total love and passion for these dogs. Just like a lot of people that are not familiar with this business, I thought, how is it possible for them to care, love and give these dogs everything that they deserve and need to live a happy and healthy life? As weeks passed my passion for the dogs grew, I learned that there is a system that we all need to follow a certain way to make sure that they would stay happy and healthy! I finally found the place where I belonged!

As the years passed my passion for these dogs kept growing and I also figured out that I was falling in love with my boss's son! After 8 years of working with Jason we found ourselves walking down the aisle to say, "I do!" What a perfect life! The man of my dreams and the career of my dreams! As the years went by things happen, life changes, regulations change and my mother-in-law, Wanda was ready to sell her business. I cried for a week trying to figure out something that we could do to save the business and my love for these dogs. I realized that maybe this was the time for me to step up and take over the family business! We had talked about it as a family then my mother-in-law and I worked out a

business arrangement so my dream of working with my dogs could go on! That night AJ's Angels Inc was born! I was excited to take on the next journey in life!

In early 2016, we had our pre-licensing inspection with the USDA, we passed all the government's requirements, and everything went great and we were on our way. AJ's Angels is licensed under my name with the USDA, Morrison County and the State of Minnesota. It does not matter if you are a large or small commercial breeder all government rules and regulations apply. We are regulated and are in compliance with each of them. Since the beginning of the breeding industry, things have come along way with changes in the rules and regulations for the protection of our animals. We, at AJ's Angels continue to strive for the best care and treatment of our animals.

Currently, we have 14 employees that take care of all our dogs. We provide care seven days a week much like a dairy farmer. They also know the dogs well enough to spot a problem by either their physical or personality change. Each one of my employees have a passion and love for those dogs just like I do! I could not be prouder of them!

Our dogs have the freedom to choose to go inside or outside through self-activated door as they please. All enclosures accommodate each animal's height and length. The dogs always have food and water in front of them 24/7. The food and water are always kept on the inside of the building where it is temperature regulated. The housing units are cleaned daily inside and outside as well.

Our pregnant mommas get groomed and moved into what we call a puppy room 2 weeks before their possible due date. Each puppy room is heated and cooled with their own thermostat to regulate the temperatures for the comfort of mom and pups. In that pen they have a heated basket in which they will comfortably have and raise their babies. All pens and trays are cleaned daily. Our pups get weaned at the age of 6 weeks and then are measured and split into two pens to meet federal regulations and give them more room to run and play!

I will now go over with you some of the things that we do to better our dogs and puppies that some people may not aware.

- Each of our adult dogs has a microchip for proper identification.
- Each our dogs have their own personal names in which they respond to. They are not just a number to us they are our fur babies and personalization is huge to us!
- We are hands on with our dogs and pups daily. Proper socialization is also extremely important to us and our animals.
- This is achieved by daily chores, treatments, grooming and just a good old petting! We have had may compliments from inspectors and pet stores on how friendly and happy our adults and puppies are!
- Our veterinarian is physically at our facility once a week and is on call 24/7 just in case of emergencies. By federal regulations, our vet only must be on premise once a year. We believe that having our vet once a week at our kennel is better only because she then can also make sure that the animals are happy and healthy!
- Annual veterinarian protocol regarding care of the dogs. This let us know how to medically treat a dog that may just not be feeling well or something nonemergency. We document these non-emergencies in what we call a vet book in which our vet also looks at weekly. Obviously, if a dog has a bigger problem going on we call our vet and bring them up to the vet's office right away!

- Veterinarian care is done on a weekly basis. This includes puppy wellness check. Proper state veterinarian and federal paperwork is gone over and signed for the pups to leave the property. This also includes a review of the vet book and checking for any issues.
- All our dog's nails get trimmed once every 3 weeks or more if needed.
- Our dogs have a dental plan set up to be cleaned once every 18 months or more if needed and completed by a veterinarian.
- This past year we have had all our dogs examined by our veterinarian and certified by the Orthopedic Foundation Association. This certification is for a dog's knees and hearts. It is not a mandatory certification. We just try to go up and beyond for our customers.
- All the adult dog's shots are kept up to date per USDA and our veterinarian guidelines.
- New breeders must have a brucellosis test done by a vet. Once that first test comes back and it is negative that animal will then be quarantined for 45 days. After the 45 days the vet will do another test, at that time if negative the dog gets to go out with the other breed stock. There is absolutely **no tolerance** of any animal to be brought into our kennel for the safety of our breeders.
- Anytime we rehome one of our breeders they must have a brucellosis test done and cleared by our vet. Thankfully, we have never had any problems with brucellosis do to our own strict regulations.
- We have taken the time to take pictures of our adult dogs and provide them to brokers should their customers want to see the parents of the pup they may be getting.

We do some showing of some of our males through American Canine Associations (ACA) shows. All our purebred adults and pups are registered though ACA. Most of our adults are also dual registered with American Pet Registry. I love to show some of our breeders! It is a great time, and we got some champion blood lines now! The males that we show took first in their breed and my schnauzer Hershel took best in show! I am super excited and proud of my boys and how well they did. I even had some people come up to me because they could not believe that these were not house dogs! I look forward to showing again once COVID is under control.

We do allow the stores that purchase our puppies to come and look at our facility. We want them to be comfortable and be able to see how their pups are raised and how our adults are happy, healthy and clean! Being knowledgeable about the pups that you are selling is a key factor. I want them to sell our pups with confidence in knowing how they are raised with their own two eyes and not by what I just tell them. I do have stores that only feel comfortable buying our puppies. To them it does not matter how many or little breed stock you own it is how social and healthy the adults and pups are. The owners of PuppyLand whose names are Justin and Kayla Kerr have been purchasing our pups since they had opened in 2018. Just this past summer they came out to our facility with the broker, Jolyn Noethe, which is the owner of J.A.K.S Puppies. I was more than happy to show them around and how our day-to-day chores and care are done. I was more than pleased to find out that they were amazed on how clean the facility is and how happy and well socialized our adults and puppies are! Being a larger breeder unfortunately we are attacked by animal activists, media, and social media.

I do believe that rules and regulations need to exist, but all in all there needs to be a line between regulations and we as American people to have the freedom of choice of where and whom we want to purchase our animals from as long as they are federal and state licensed. In California they have already passed a law that all pet stores are banned for any licensed dog breeder and they can only go through rescue organizations. The rescue organizations are not licensed federally and not regulated has hard as we are, quite unfortunate and sad if you ask me. I do agree that not everyone should be in the commercial breeding business due to their lack of real love, passion, and healthy welfare of the animals, but that is not the case for us.

This proud family business has been around for over 40 years and with trials and tribulations as all businesses have, we strive for better for our animals. Our adult breeders and pups do have more hours of healthy interaction with the employees each day then most 9 to 5 average American workers do with their own pets at home, and I am proud of that!

If I could help the world see what true love and work that go into all my dogs I would. Unfortunately, that is near to impossible to ever change a person's mindset. All I can do now is to pour my heart out and help you see that changing the regulations in Washington only shows people that is ok to tear down other people's dreams just because they may not understand. We larger breeders have been stereo typed for many years by being called Puppy Mills which is very offending. There are breeders out there that have under 50 breeders and may not take as well of care of them as I do with my larger number of dogs. It should never be about the quantity is all about the quality of the animals.

All I can do now is to hope and pray that this testimony may have helped you understand what hard work and love can equal out to be one woman's passion in life.

Sincerely,
A Woman With A Dream,
Angie McDuffee