

Kennel called 'puppy mill'

Officials investigate conditions at facility

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OLATHE — The Colorado Department of Agriculture has opened an investigation into a dog breeding facility accused of being a “puppy mill,” agency spokeswoman Christi Lightcap confirmed Monday.

Colorow Kennels in Olathe is being investigated by the state under the Pet Animal Care Facilities Act, or PACFA, Lightcap said, and the results of that investigation will be available soon.

“I can’t comment, only to say that the facility is under investigation,” she said.

Lightcap declined to say what led to the PACFA investigation, which was revealed to The Daily Sentinel in an e-mail last week from Vendla “Vee” Stockdale, president of Citizens for Animal Welfare and Shelter, a Crawford-based animal rescue group.

Stockdale’s e-mail, sent on Nov. 10, accuses Colorow Kennels of being a “puppy mill” with “dogs living in awful conditions and puppies dying on a daily basis.”

Stockdale wrote that one of her group’s board members went undercover and shot photos and video at the facility.

“We realized this was not a breeding facility, but a puppy mill with dogs living in their own urine and feces, over 75 puppies have died since June and a few adults,” she wrote. “The dogs are put into empty food bags and thrown in the trash which is then taken to the local landfill; this is a violation.”

Stockdale has declined to comment since, saying she made an exclusive deal with a Denver TV station for a program slated to run in January.

In her e-mail, Stockdale wrote that the Humane Society of the United States helped build a case against Colorow Kennels that was presented to the state Department of Agriculture.

The Humane Society also declined to comment for this article.

Holly Tarry, Colorado state director for the Humane Society of the U.S., said she wants to honor Stockdale’s TV deal and will not give out any information.

“They have made an agreement with the media, and I don’t want to jeopardize my relationship with them and respect what they want to do,” Tarry said.

Stockdale said she wrote her e-mail because the state Department of Agriculture seemed to be dragging its heels and, “It is time to reach out to the press and close this puppy mill.”

Colorow Kennels is listed as a member on the Web site of the Professional Licensed Dog Breeders Group of Colorado.

The kennel’s owner, Nita Smith of Olathe, could not be reached for comment Monday.

On the professional dog breeders’ Web site, Smith wrote a description of her business, which she said was established in 1980. She also said she formerly ran another business, Nita’s Dog Patch.

“I have actively been raising puppies since 1959,” Smith wrote. “I have a degree in animal science which helps me keeping my dogs and puppies in good health.”

The results of the state’s investigation into the kennel should be available by the end of next week, Lightcap said.