



ALLISON HUNTER / INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM BUREAU

New York state-based Marshall BioResources has been cited by U.S. inspectors for animal injuries, mouldy food and filthy cages in its facilities. Marshall has previously supplied research dogs for Toronto's University Health Network and the Lawson Health Research Institute in London, Ont.

RESEARCH

TWO ONTARIO HOSPITALS USED DOGS FROM INDUSTRIAL-SCALE U.S. BREEDER

CARE VIOLATIONS

MASIH KHALATBARI,
JENNA OLSEN,
ROBERT CRIBB,
ALLISON HUNTER AND
SAMANTHA MARSHAK

At least two Canadian hospital research labs have imported dogs for scientific research from a U.S. breeder cited for repeated animal care violations, the Investigative Journalism Bureau has found.

The University Health Network (UHN) in Toronto, which says it no longer uses dogs for research, and the Lawson Health Research Institute in London, Ont., which recently shut down its dog testing program, have been past customers of Marshall BioResources.

Marshall, an industrial-scale breeding operation in Upstate New York, has been cited by federal inspectors for injuries and sores on its animals, mould-covered food, and feces-filled cages in multiple areas of its facility. In all, inspectors logged 11 violations against Marshall involving numerous dogs and cats between 2021 and 2024.

The revelations come as scientists and lawmakers debate whether dogs must be used for experiments at all.

A UHN cancer research study involving dog testing, published in July 2025, says "sexually mature male beagle dogs were purchased from Marshall BioResources."

Brad Wouters, UHN's executive vice-president of science and research, said in a statement the research for that study — which explored the development of a new cancer therapy — was conducted in 2019 and that all dog research ceased at the hospital network in 2020.

"As UHN has not engaged in research involving dogs or cats in more than six years, we are not in a position to comment on external allegations related to any breeders," Wouters said. "At the time the study was conducted, the research followed all ... institutional guidelines and oversight processes."

Guidelines for acquiring purpose-bred research dogs in Canada are set by the Canadian Council on Animal Care, a federal non-profit that oversees the use of animals in scientific research. It says animals must be obtained from credible suppliers "whose reputation is

based on humane, safe and timely supply and transport of healthy animals."

UHN stopped using dogs in medical research because "with the advancement of research techniques, scientists are increasingly using innovative models," Wouters said.

Meanwhile, the Lawson Health Research Institute, based in St. Joseph's Health Care in London, Ont., used dogs in scientific research for decades. Some of those animals came from Marshall.

Lawson shut down its dog testing program last summer after the IJB reported on procedures that included inducing up to three-hour heart attacks in dogs.

A hospital review concluded St. Joseph's met regulatory and scientific standards, but also noted gaps in communication with the public and governance issues.

In an unattributed statement sent to the IJB, St. Joseph's said it is "developing an action plan to address all the findings and recommendations," including developing policies that ensure its responsibilities are "understood and followed."

The hospital last bought dogs from Marshall in 2022 with the approval of Western University's Animal Care Committee, which oversees the lab's dog testing program.

"At the time of procurement, Marshall BioResources was certified by the United States Drug Administration, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care," the statement says.

VIOLATIONS INVOLVED BOTH DOGS AND CATS

Reporters with the IJB and the New York City News Service reviewed inspection reports and court records detailing animal care violations at Marshall cited by authorities.

Inspectors from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service — known as APHIS — noted "multiple dogs" at Marshall had injuries that were not identified by staff at the breeder during daily inspections in 2021 and hadn't been addressed by veterinarians, according to one inspection report.

Several dogs were noted to have "interdigital cysts" — painful bumps between the toes — it reads.

"Daily observation at the facility must be conducted by employees and attendants who can recognize when animal health or condition is compromised," the report says.

APHIS issued three "non-critical" violations during this inspection and directed Marshall to correct the issues. That happened, according to an inspection 10 days later.

In April 2022, inspectors noted "several enclosures" housing cats were not being properly cleaned, and feces were accumulating.

Marshall was also cited for mouldy food at one building in an August 2024 inspection. The same findings were noted three years earlier in another building.

An unnamed Marshall spokesperson said in a written statement the company's operations are "consistently found to comply with an array of processes and standards," and that "in the rare event that we do receive feedback, our veterinary and operations teams take such very seriously, moving quickly to understand and implement USDA recommendations."

The statement also said the company's work has led to "breakthroughs that change the face of medicine, including the development of insulin used by upwards of 200 million diabetics, invention of the defibrillator to restore human heartbeats, and many life-saving medications."

Naomi Charalambakis, a neuroscientist and director of science policy and communications at Americans for Medical Progress, which advocates for using animals in medical research, said there's been a "gradual reduction" in the practice in recent years.

"I hope there is a world one day where we don't need animals ... but we haven't seen that yet," said Charalambakis, who has worked with Marshall BioResources. "I'm not here to defend animal use. I'm here to protect patients, humans and animals alike with the best available science. And right now, that's going to involve animals."

An IJB survey of the top research universities in Canada last year found that, of the 13 that responded, 12 said they are not currently using dogs in invasive research.

Even so, more than 17,800 dogs entered Canada through the U.S. for research

purposes between 2019 and 2025, according to data from the Canada Border Services Agency obtained by the IJB.

Research facilities in Canada purchase purpose-bred dogs — animals meant for scientific testing — from specialized U.S. breeders to ensure healthy animal test subjects that can produce reproducible research findings.

"We have a huge ethical obligation to adhere to Canadian standards ... and if other places are out of alignment with those standards on ethical or practical grounds, we can't do that," said Dr. Kerry Bowman, a bioethicist at the University of Toronto who reviewed the IJB's findings.

Proposed legislation in Ontario, triggered by the IJB's continuing investigation, would ban the use of dogs and cats in invasive scientific research and prohibit breeding dogs and cats for research purposes.

Angela Fernandez, director of the animal law program at the University of Toronto, says the proposed legislation should be expanded to prevent the importation of dogs from suppliers that have been shown to have difficulty meeting standards.

"If the Ontario law is only targeting breeding, it's going to miss this huge percentage of animals that are not being purpose-bred in the province," she said.

A similar proposal is on the table in Michigan, where a bill known as Queenie's Law was introduced to the state legislature with the intent of ending the use of "research or training activities on dogs in a manner that causes pain or distress."

U.S. Food and Drug Administration commissioner Martin Makary announced in April 2025 a "groundbreaking step" to replace animal testing in drug development with "more effective, human-relevant methods."

Investigative Journalism Bureau and New York City News Service, with files from Vihaan Bhatnagar, Stacey Kuznetsova, Mary Beech and Kate Morano.
The Investigative Journalism Bureau at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health is a collaborative investigative newsroom supported by Postmedia that partners with academics, researchers and journalists while training the next generation of investigative reporters.

Danielle Capin of Ontario received clearance to work in the U.S. after concerns about her work in Canada.

collaborative newsroom media that academics, journalists next generation reporters.