



# Official Briefing: Dennis Sugar

*Subject: Animal Cruelty History and Current Operations in Florida and North Carolina*

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**May 19, 2026**

Animal Victory Petition: <https://animalvictory.org/petition/punish-owner-of-petting-zoo-where-dead-and-malnourished-pigs-were-found/>

*Animal Victory makes no accusations against Dennis Sugar regarding any current conduct. All information contained in this document is drawn exclusively from public court records, official legal proceedings, Dennis Sugar's own public statements, and our published petition. This document is shared for informational purposes only.*

**ALERT — May 2026:** In May 2026, a concerned Florida resident contacted Animal Victory with information regarding suspected animal abuse involving Dennis Sugar and his traveling Zen Hooves operation in the Milton, Pensacola, and Panama City areas of Florida. The information provided by this resident is consistent with Sugar's documented history of animal neglect and is consistent with the pattern of conduct described throughout this briefing. Animal Victory takes all reports of suspected animal abuse seriously and is publishing this updated briefing in response to that contact.

The following information is provided as a matter of public record. Animal Victory publishes this briefing solely to inform the public of documented legal history and to encourage responsible due diligence. We are not making any accusation of current wrongdoing.

## **Background and Criminal Conviction**

In 2019, Dennis Sugar operated a petting zoo named **Sugar Sweet Farms** in Lafayette, Sussex County, New Jersey. Authorities and veterinarians responding to the facility discovered a severe case of animal neglect. Over thirty dead pigs, skulls, animal remains, and a dead goat were found on the property. The surviving animals, including pigs and goats, were found to be malnourished, emaciated, and living without access to clean water or adequate food.

To understand the scale of what happened: Sugar had purchased approximately 250 piglets from a commercial farm. Within the first two days, 30 of those piglets were already dead. By the time authorities arrived, over half of the 250 animals had perished. A veterinarian described the surviving pigs as emaciated. A goat was found dead in a hay pile, and surviving goats were suffering from parasites and untreated injuries. These animals were entirely dependent on Sugar for their survival, and they were failed.

Following these discoveries, a grand jury indicted Sugar in early 2020 on felony charges, including multiple counts of third and fourth-degree animal cruelty resulting in bodily injury or death. He could have faced up to 13 years in prison if convicted on all counts.

After 3.5 years of court proceedings and multiple delays, Sugar resolved the case in late 2022 by accepting a heavily negotiated plea deal. He pleaded guilty to two disorderly persons offenses, a significant downgrade from the original felony charges. In November 2022, a New Jersey Superior Court judge sentenced him to one year of probation, ten days of community service, fines, and an order to pay \$3,000 in restitution to Tamberline Sanctuary, the organization that rescued the surviving animals. He received no jail time.

## Business Rebranding and Relocation

Following his 2019 arrest and the closure of Sugar Sweet Farms, public records indicate that Sugar relocated his operations out of New Jersey entirely. He moved to Hubert, North Carolina (Onslow County), where he established a new business. Over time, he has operated under a series of different business names, each representing a fresh start in a new market where his past was less likely to be known.

Business Name	Details
<b>Sugar Sweet Farms</b>	Original business in New Jersey where the 2019 animal cruelty offenses occurred. Closed in August 2019, five days before Sugar was arrested.
<b>Lazy Day Farm</b>	First rebrand, based in North Carolina at 599 Bear Creek Road, Hubert, NC. Operates as a petting zoo and event center. Still active.
<b>Zen Hooves</b>	Current traveling brand. Operates out of the Lazy Day Farm property in North Carolina but focuses heavily on traveling goat yoga events, primarily in Florida during the winter and spring months.

This pattern of rebranding is significant. Each name change allowed Sugar to enter new markets, partner with new venues, and attract new customers who had no knowledge of the prior animal cruelty conviction. The name Zen Hooves, in particular, carries no obvious connection to his previous businesses, making it difficult for venues and the public to identify him without conducting a deliberate background search.

## Current Operations in Florida

Sugar has aggressively expanded his Zen Hooves goat yoga business into Florida, particularly during the cooler months when he is less active at his North Carolina farm. He primarily targets breweries, distilleries, and waterfront bars, charging participants approximately \$33 to \$37.50 per class (plus taxes and fees), which includes one hour of goat yoga and one complimentary beverage.

In May 2026, a concerned citizen contacted Animal Victory with information consistent with this documented pattern of traveling operations in the **Milton, Pensacola, and Panama City areas of Florida.**

The following Florida venues have been confirmed through public event listings, the Zen Hooves website, and social media posts to have hosted or scheduled Zen Hooves events in 2024, 2025, and 2026:

Venue Name	City / Region	Area of Florida
Gary's Brewery and Biergarten	Pensacola	Northwest (Panhandle)
Coastal County Brewing	Pensacola	Northwest (Panhandle)
Soundside Waterfront Bar	Pensacola area	Northwest (Panhandle)
St. Michael's Brewing Company	Navarre	Northwest (Panhandle)
Palm Folly Hard Seltzer	Santa Rosa Beach	Northwest (Panhandle)
3rd Planet Brewing	Niceville	Northwest (Panhandle)
Magnanimous Brewing	Tampa	Central West
Good Liquid Brewing	Sarasota	Central West
Infinite Ale Works	Ocala	Central
Fish Hawk Spirits	Ocala	Central
COPP Brewery & Winery	Crystal River	Central West
Dented Keg Ale Works	New Port Richey	Central West
If I Brewed The World	St. Petersburg	Central West
POST on the Hill	St. Petersburg area	Central West
ABBQ Restaurant	Jacksonville Beach	Northeast
Lincoln's Beard Brewing Company	Miami	Southeast
ChainBridge Distillery	Oakland Park	Southeast

***Note regarding Jacksonville Beach (September 2024):** Zen Hooves encountered a regulatory obstacle when Jacksonville Beach's municipal ordinance (Ordinance 2020-8155) prohibiting livestock was applied to their planned event. The event was relocated to a nearby restaurant. This incident demonstrates that local ordinances can and do apply to Sugar's traveling operations, and that venues should verify local livestock and animal exhibition regulations before hosting.*

## Current Operations in North Carolina

In addition to his Florida circuit, Sugar continues to operate events throughout North Carolina under both the Lazy Day Farm and Zen Hooves names. His home base, Lazy Day Farm, is located at 599 Bear Creek Road in Hubert, NC (Onslow County), and is open to the public during scheduled festivals. The farm hosts Easter egg hunts, summer bashes, holiday events, birthday parties, and private petting zoo visits.

The following North Carolina venues have been confirmed through public event listings and media coverage to have hosted Zen Hooves or Lazy Day Farm events:

Venue Name	City
Waterline Brewing Company	Wilmington
Flying Machine Brewing	Wilmington
Leland Brewing Company	Leland
NoDa Brewing Company	Charlotte
Triple C Brewing	Charlotte
Trolley Barn Fermentory	Charlotte
Legion Brewing	Charlotte
Hi-Wire Brewing	Charlotte
Eleven Lakes Brewing	Charlotte area
Lost Worlds Brewing	Charlotte area
Lake Norman Brewing	Lake Norman area
Primal Brewing	Charlotte area
Heist Brewery Barrel Arts	Charlotte
Monday Night Brewing	Charlotte

In January 2026, local Wilmington television station WWAY TV3 covered a Zen Hooves event at Waterline Brewing Company, describing it as a "goat therapy" experience for the new year. The segment presented the event positively and made no mention of Sugar's criminal history, illustrating how effectively the rebranding has concealed his past from local media and the public.

## Public Warnings and Dennis Sugar's Own Admissions

The expansion of Zen Hooves has not gone unnoticed by those familiar with Sugar's history.

### Warning from a Competing Business (January 8, 2025)

Rob Canton of Grady Goat Farm, a Florida-based goat yoga operator, published a detailed public warning on Facebook alerting businesses and customers to Sugar's background. Canton wrote:

*"Several years ago, a New Jersey man named Dennis Sugar was indicted on Animal Cruelty Charges. Google his name and his then-business 'Sugar Sweet Farms' for the details... It appears he fled NJ to re-start under a new name, Lazy Day Farm, in North Carolina, where he took his petting zoo on the road and was able to conceal his past offenses from many with the name change... But now he is back again in full force, traveling throughout the Eastern U.S. I noticed him because he focuses significantly in the State of Florida during these colder months and has abandoned the Lazy Day Farm moniker for the new Zen Hooves... I've got a ton of photos people have shared with me of his sickly animals."*

Canton's post tagged the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, Pasco Sheriff's Office, and Polk County Sheriff's Office.

### Dennis Sugar's Public Response and Key Admissions (January 21, 2025)

Dennis Sugar posted a lengthy response on the Zen Hooves Facebook page. This post is significant because it constitutes Sugar's own public admission of the following facts:

**Confirmation of Charges:** Sugar confirmed he was brought up on second-degree animal cruelty charges in 2019. He described purchasing 250 piglets that arrived sick with coccidiosis, losing 30 within the first two days, and ultimately losing "over half of them."

**The Plea Deal:** Sugar confirmed taking a misdemeanor plea deal after 3.5 years of court delays, stating he did so "just to put it behind me."

**Recent Mass Animal Death at His Current Farm (April 2024):** Most critically, Sugar disclosed that in April 2024, two Pitbulls got onto the Lazy Day Farm property and "killed 21 of our goats and injured another 18." He claimed to have spent over \$20,000 treating the injured goats. This event occurred at his active North Carolina farm within the past two years, meaning 21 animals in his care died and 18 were seriously injured.

**Regulatory Requirements:** Sugar stated that the Department of Agriculture requires his goats to be seen every 30 days for a health certificate before traveling, and that

those certificates are sent to the Department of Agriculture so they can track his movements.

## **Regulatory and Reporting Information**

**Florida Animal Abuser Registry (Dexter's Law):** As of January 1, 2026, Florida operates a statewide Animal Abuser Registry maintained by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). A search of this database for "Dennis Sugar" currently returns no results. This is because the registry tracks convictions under Florida Statute 828.12, and Sugar's conviction occurred in New Jersey. His New Jersey conviction was also downgraded to a misdemeanor disorderly persons offense, which may not trigger automatic interstate reporting to Florida's registry.

**USDA Animal Welfare Act Licensing:** The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) requires traveling animal exhibitors, including petting zoos and goat yoga operations, to hold a Class C Exhibitor License under the Animal Welfare Act. Venues are encouraged to request proof of a current, valid USDA exhibitor license from any traveling animal operator before allowing animals on their premises.

**Local Ordinances:** As demonstrated by the Jacksonville Beach incident in 2024, local municipal ordinances regarding livestock and animal exhibitions apply to traveling operations like Zen Hooves. Venues are encouraged to verify applicable local regulations before hosting events involving live animals.

## What Animal Victory Urges

Animal Victory urges all businesses, venues, and individuals to conduct their own independent research and exercise appropriate due diligence before entering into any agreement with Dennis Sugar or any business he operates. We make no claim as to his current conduct. We simply encourage the public to be informed.

If anyone has direct, firsthand knowledge of animal neglect or a violation of applicable law, we encourage them to report it immediately to local animal control authorities or law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the event is taking place. Should verified information of a legal violation be brought to our attention, Animal Victory will take appropriate action.

### **To report animal abuse or neglect in Florida:**

Contact your local county animal control office or call the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) at **1-800-HELP-FLA (1-800-435-7352)**.

### **To report animal abuse or neglect in North Carolina:**

Contact Onslow County Animal Services at **(910) 455-0182** or your local county animal control office.

### **Contact Animal Victory:**

1319 Military Cutoff Road, Suite CC, Unit #101, Wilmington, NC 28405 |  
info@animalvictory.org | 1-800-634-3439

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