



Official Briefing: Dennis Sugar

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

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 a report regarding suspected animal welfare concerns involving Dennis Sugar and his traveling Zen Hooves operation in the Milton, Pensacola, and Panama City areas of Florida. Animal Victory takes all reports of suspected animal abuse seriously and is publishing this updated briefing to encourage public awareness and due diligence.

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.

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
Sugar Sweet Farms	Original business in New Jersey where the 2019 animal cruelty offenses occurred. Closed in August 2019, five days before Sugar was arrested.
Lazy Day Farm	First rebrand, based in North Carolina at 599 Bear Creek Road, Hubert, NC. Operates as a petting zoo and event center. Still active.
Zen Hooves	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.

Following his relocation, Sugar has operated under a series of different business names. Operating under new names, such as Lazy Day Farm and Zen Hooves, has the effect of separating his current operations from the public record of his prior animal cruelty conviction associated with Sugar Sweet Farms. This makes it difficult for venues and the public to identify his history 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:

IT IS POSSIBLE THE VENUE DID NOT HOST THE EVENT AGAIN — THIS IS FROM THE NEWS AND WE WANT TO WARN THE PUBLIC ONLY

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:

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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:

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/100092462671594/posts/528221626936589/>

Zen Hooves 's Post



Zen Hooves

January 21, 2025 · 🌐



I want to take a moment to address something that has been messaged to our venues and participants of our classes from another goat yoga company. In 2019 I was brought up on second-degree animal cruelty charges I bought 250 piglets from a commercial farm that came to us with a parasite called coccidiosis. I didn't know they were sick when they arrived and after the first 24 hours noticing they were losing weight, we were instructed by our veterinarian to start them on a treatment of Corrid. By the second day, we had lost 30 of the piglets we moved them from a farm we rented to our petting zoo where we would be able to give them better care despite treating them. We still lost over half of them when the county vet came out, he said they should have been put down as a result of not putting them down. I was charged with animal cruelty now comes the humane part to put down baby piglets he said they should have been thumped, that is a process where you grab them by the back legs and swing their head into a cinderblock or concrete wall. If you think that is acceptable, then I am guilty as I don't have the stomach for that. After 3 1/2 years of court delays, I took a plea deal for a misdemeanor just to put it behind me. If I had to do it over again, I would still try to save them. During those 3 1/2 years no animals were taken out of my care and when I asked why they weren't I was told there wasn't a reason to as they were in good health and being taken care of.

I want to be clear I'm not saying I've never made any mistakes, because I have. However, I have always try to learn from them and do better. At my current farm and while traveling to Brewery's for goat yoga events, I have never had any issues with the care of the animals and have never had any animals removed from my care Unfortunately sensationalized headlines don't tell the full story.

Rob, Canton of Grady goat Yoga, a competitor has been messaging or breweries and customers about my past. It has been disheartening to know negativity is being brought into something I love. Goat yoga has been such a wonderful experience for me, and I see firsthand the joy it brings to people and the goats. Rob forced me to stop doing goat yoga near him in 2023 the court case was still dragging on and I felt until it was resolved that it was in the best interest for me and the goats to not do any events around him. If I was the monster, he is telling everyone I am why would it only be an issue when I worked in an area where he services.

For those that think I only do it for the money, I want you to know that couldn't be further from the truth. I do this because I love the animals and I always have I enjoy sharing the animals with the public and seeing the joy it brings to everyone and the goats in April 20 24 we had two Pitbulls get on our farm and killed 21 of our goats and injured another 18 I spent over 20,000 to treat the 18 goats that are my family. Did I have the money to spend? The answer is no, but I maxed out my credit cards and made sure they got the care they needed, that is not something in animal abuser does.

Our farm is open to the public and anyone is welcome to come see how we take care of our animals, whether at the farm or at one of the brewery events I am always happy to have a conversation about their care. We are required by the department of agriculture to have the goat seen every 30 days for a health certificate. Those certificates are sent to the Department of agriculture before we go anywhere they can track where we are going and where we have been. All of our goats have names (and they know their names) and have different personalities. They are part of our family and will always be whether we do goat yoga or not.

I hope you still come visit us at our farm (Lazy Dav Farm) or at one of our goat yoga events (Zen



Comment as Animal Victory



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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