



March 17, 2020

The Hon. Michael Rogers
Oklahoma Secretary of State
Oklahoma State Capitol Bldg., Room 122
2300 N. Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
Via email to: executivelegislative@sos.ok.gov

Dear Secretary Rogers,

On behalf of the New England Anti-Vivisection Society (NEAVS), which represents 88,000 Americans, including nearly 500 members and supporters in Oklahoma, I am writing to alert your office to an apparent violation of the Revenue and Taxation Penalties Uniform Procedure on Operation Without License - Suspension and Forfeiture (68 Okla. §68-1212 (2015)) by Riner & Associates, Inc. (hereinafter Riner & Associates).

2016 Suspension of Riner & Associates

As you may know, on February 3, 2016, the Office of the Secretary of State of Oklahoma issued a Certificate of Suspension, signed by you, to Riner & Associates, located in Nowata, OK, declaring that Riner & Associates "is not a corporation in good standing according to the records of this office." According to the entity page for Riner & Associates on your website as of today, March 17, 2020, this suspension of Riner & Associates remains in effect.¹

Operating Unlawfully While Suspended

There is strong evidence that Riner & Associates has continued to operate in Oklahoma in apparent violation of the suspension your office issued:

- **Active APHIS Registration:** Riner & Associates maintains an active registration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS). APHIS' most recent (January 30, 2020) listing of registered entities shows that Riner & Associates is still a registered entity.
- **APHIS Annual Reports Submitted in 2016, 2017, & 2018:** Further, Riner & Associates has sent to APHIS federally required annual reports for fiscal years 2016, 2017, and 2018. (The 2019 reports were due on December 1, 2019, but APHIS has not yet posted them for any entities.) These reports are only submitted by entities actively engaged in research, which is the activity you prohibited Riner & Associates from engaging in.
- **Records of APHIS On-Site Inspections:** Also, the Riner & Associates facility has been inspected in-person by APHIS personnel six times since being suspended by the

¹ Okla. Secretary of State, *Entity Summary Information: Riner & Associates, Inc.*, <https://www.sos.ok.gov/corp/corpInformation.aspx?id=1912261347> (last visited Mar. 17, 2020).

Oklahoma Secretary of State. All of these documents (annual reports and inspection reports) are available at APHIS' website.²

- **March 1, 2020 Published Paper:** On March 1st of this year, an article was published in the academic journal "Parasites & Vectors."³ The lead author is affiliated with Zoetis, Inc., a pharmaceutical corporation headquartered in New Jersey. One of the co-authors is John Riner, whose affiliation is listed as Animal Health Innovations, Route 1, Box 435, Nowata, OK, 74048, USA. There is no registration for an entity named "Animal Health Innovations" in the Business Entities database on the Oklahoma Secretary of State's website.⁴ It is worth noting that the aforementioned mailing address is the same given in official documents submitted to your office for "Riner & Associates."

Pattern of Unlawful Activities

As you may know, this is not the first time Mr. Riner and entities under his control have been cited for violations of law in the course of his business dealings. He was cited by federal authorities for violating the federal Animal Welfare Act in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2019. These violations consist of various forms of mistreatment and neglect of dogs and cats.

- In 2014, an APHIS inspector reported: *"A female beagle named "Ida Mae" (Microchip #0A02412566) was extremely wobbly and ataxic. She also seemed disoriented, responding slowly to verbal cues from facility representative. She had great difficulty walking and seemed to have little control over her hind legs An animal in this condition is at extreme risk of injury and will have great difficulty eating and drinking normally."*⁵
- In 2017, a USDA-APHIS inspector determined that: *"there is nothing to indicate that the attending veterinarian has the appropriate awareness and oversight needed to ensure adequate veterinary care at the facility."*⁶
- In 2019, a USDA-APHIS Inspector concluded that violations occurred related to veterinary care as well as cleaning, sanitation, housekeeping, and pest control.⁷

² U.S. Dep't of Ag., *APHIS - Animal Care*, [https://acis.aphis.edc.usda.gov/ords/f?p=118:1:::~](https://acis.aphis.edc.usda.gov/ords/f?p=118:1:::) (last visited Mar. 17, 2020).

³ Kristina Kryda, et. al., *Efficacy of a Novel Orally Administered Combination Product Containing Sarolaner, Moxidectin and Pyrantel (Simparica Trio™) Against Induced Infestations of Five Common Tick Species Infesting Dogs in the USA* (Mar. 1, 2020), <https://parasitesandvectors.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13071-020-3945-2> (last visited Mar. 17, 2020).

⁴ Okla. Secretary of State, *Registered Businesses Public Search*, [https://www.sos.ok.gov/\(S\(rxow5nrnwbjxrg45rwhh45\)\)/corp/corplnquiryFind.aspx](https://www.sos.ok.gov/(S(rxow5nrnwbjxrg45rwhh45))/corp/corplnquiryFind.aspx) (last visited Mar. 17, 2020).

⁵ U.S. Dep't of Ag., *Inspection Report* (Sept. 4, 2014), <https://acis.aphis.edc.usda.gov/ords/f?p=118:21:::NO::RXQIZAVXA:247141903510148&cs=156B542A7DEE0F74DA9EF346372550DF8> (last visited Mar. 17, 2020).

⁶ U.S. Dep't of Ag., *Inspection Report* (Aug. 14, 2017), <https://acis.aphis.edc.usda.gov/ords/f?p=118:21:::NO::RXQIZAVXA:2016082568747816&cs=194635975D763EE0BF59636B9194D0F9E> (last visited Mar. 17, 2020).

⁷ U.S. Dep't of Ag., *Inspection Report* (Apr. 11, 2019), <https://acis.aphis.edc.usda.gov/ords/f?p=118:21:::NO::RXQIZAVXA:2016082569452525&cs=18CD961EC41605BEC16B3AE2CCADE0492> (last visited Mar. 17, 2020).



Request for Official Action Against Riner & Associates

According to Oklahoma law:

*"[a]ny person who attempts or purports to exercise any of the rights, privileges or powers of any such domestic corporation, association or organization, or who does or attempts to do any business in the state in behalf of any such foreign corporation, association or organization, without having first obtained a license therefor, as provided herein, or after any such license so obtained shall have been canceled, forfeited, or expired, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor."*⁸

As you investigate what penalty may be warranted, we respectfully suggest you consider what liability Zoetis, LLC may share given the evidence outlined on page 2 of this letter that Zoetis, LLC funded Mr. Riner's activities, which we believe were conducted illegally in the state of Oklahoma.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Ryan".

Mike Ryan
Director, Government Affairs
New England Anti-Vivisection Society

⁸ Revenue & Taxation Penalties - Uniform Procedure - Operation Without License - Suspension and Forfeiture, 68 Okla. §68-1212(B) (2015).

Encl: Exhibit A: Certificate of Suspension



CC: Steve Burrage, Chairman, Oklahoma Tax Commission

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