

In the Wisconsin Court of Appeals

DISTRICT IV

APPROXIMATELY 2,000 BEAGLE DOGS AND PUPPIES,
10489 W. Blue Mounds Road,
Blue Mounds, WI 53517,

PETITIONER-APPELLANTS,

v.

RIDGLAN FARMS, INC.
10489 W. Blue Mounds Road,
Blue Mounds, WI 53517,

RESPONDENT.

On Appeal from Final Order of the Circuit Court
for Dane County, Case No. 26cv347,
Honorable Stephen E. Ehlke, Presiding

**PETITIONER-APPELLANTS' MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF AN
INJUNCTION PENDING APPEAL**

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INTRODUCTION

Petitioner-Appellants in this case are the hundreds of dogs that remain confined in cruel conditions at Ridglan Farms (“Ridglan”), a beagle breeding and research facility that has become notorious for animal cruelty. This motion seeks injunctive relief to ensure they are not illegally euthanized and that they may live to see the outcome of this case.

On January 30, 2026, Petitioner-Appellants filed a common law habeas corpus action, on behalf of the beagle dogs and puppies who are being confined at Ridglan. The petition provides extensive evidence of ongoing animal cruelty, requests a court order that Ridglan must justify its continued custody, and requests transfer of the beagles to qualified rescue organizations upon confirmation that Ridglan is violating the law. The petition, while novel, is based on the premises that Wisconsin’s animal cruelty statute creates a legal interest protecting dogs from cruelty, and that common law habeas corpus is the appropriate procedure to obtain relief from illegal confinement when no adequate alternative remedy is available. Courts have routinely granted habeas relief in an analogous situation: when the conditions of a child’s custody are unlawful or harmful and custody must be reassigned to vindicate the child’s interest in being free from cruelty.

A motion for a temporary injunction accompanied the petition, asking the court, among other things, to prohibit the euthanasia of the beagles without the consent of a court-appointed guardian ad litem/referee.

On February 6, 2026, the court granted Ridglan’s motion to dismiss and declined to grant the temporary injunction, erroneously

declaring that the beagles were unlikely to succeed on the merits, and granted Ridglan’s motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim. That decision was timely appealed on February 20, 2026. Temporary injunctive relief prohibiting medically unnecessary euthanasia is requested pending appeal.

BACKGROUND

At Ridglan, hundreds of dogs are warehoused in filthy and small wire cages stacked upon each other. Ridglan does not provide them with adequate veterinary care. They do not take them on walks or give them adequate socialization. They do not ensure their cage conditions are safe or sanitary. Even the buildings themselves are so unsanitary that feces pile up on the floor and there are puddles of urine throughout. One inspector found the facility’s ventilation so poor, he became nauseous. Most shocking is the history of unnecessary surgeries and mutilations, conducted by non-veterinarians, without appropriate pain relief. To be a beagle inside of Ridglan is to suffer. R.2 ¶¶ 9–110.¹

The evidence of Ridglan’s systemic cruelty is substantial, broad, and well-documented. In late 2024, the Circuit Court of Dane County in another action heard testimony from former employees, investigators, and experts in veterinary science and animal behavior in considering an application to appoint a special prosecutor. R.2 ¶¶ 16–24; *see* R.3:336, 344-58. In January 2025, that court determined there was probable cause that Ridglan had committed felony and misdemeanor animal cruelty. R.3:357-58.

¹ Citations to “R.” refer to the corresponding document numbers of the circuit court record lodged with this Court as the record on appeal.

Subsequently, the Wisconsin Veterinary Examining Board suspended the license of Ridglan’s veterinarian for mistreating animals for conduct occurring after the probable cause finding. R.3:383-405. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection requested prosecution for over 300 violations committed by Ridglan Farms. R.3:220–36. To avoid liability for criminal animal cruelty, Ridglan entered into a stipulation with a court-appointed prosecutor, agreeing to shutter its breeding operation in July 2026. R.3:407-09. Dogs may continue to remain at Ridglan under their research license. *See id.*; R.2 ¶¶ 26–34.

Perhaps surrendering to the legal and public pressure to stop its ongoing animal abuse, Ridglan has reportedly agreed to release 1,500 dogs to sanctuaries and rescues. Bryan Polcyn, *Ridglan Farms Beagle Deal: About 1,500 Dogs Set for Rescue*, FOX6 (Apr. 29, 2026, at 15:15 CT), <https://www.fox6now.com/news/ridglan-farms-beagles-fate-major-announcement-coming-thursday> (“Ridglan Farms Beagle Deal”). Yet, hundreds of dogs seemingly excluded from this deal will remain in persistent and cruel conditions with their lives at risk. See R.2 ¶¶ 93–110.

The dogs that remain are at risk of illegal euthanasia. Ridglan’s Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) has previously endorsed medically unnecessary euthanasia of dogs to increase profit margins: “[W]e still do occasional culling of retired breeders, dogs that have traits which render them unsellable and occasionally even out sex ratios in older dogs.” R.3:423. More recently, the special prosecutor indicated concern in his report regarding the potential of unlawful euthanasia, stating that euthanasia “for economic reasons” is a

“reality” of businesses like Ridglan’s. R.3:365. Providing heightened cause for concern, Ridglan’s counsel failed to respond to a letter from Petitioner-Appellants’ counsel requesting that the facility refrain from medically unnecessary euthanasia during the pendency of this appeal. Consequently, hundreds of beagle dogs and puppies face an imminent risk of death.

Appellants ask this Court to alleviate that risk and enjoin Ridglan from doing what is already a crime: killing dogs through medically unnecessary euthanasia.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Wis. Stat. § 813.02(1)(a) provides: “When it appears from a party’s pleading that the party is entitled to judgment and any part thereof consists in restraining some act, the commission or continuance of which during the litigation would injure the party, or when during the litigation it shall appear that a party is doing or threatens or is about to do, or is procuring or suffering some act to be done in violation of the rights of another party and tending to render the judgment ineffectual, a temporary injunction may be granted to restrain such act.” Wis. Stat. § 813.02(1)(a).

Wis. Stat. § 808.07(2)(a) provides: “During the pendency of an appeal, . . . an appellate court may . . . grant an injunction; or . . . [m]ake any order appropriate to preserve the existing state of affairs or the effectiveness of the judgment subsequently to be entered.” Wis. Stat. § 808.07(2)(a). Wis. Stat. § 809.12 notes that any “person seeking relief under s. 808.07 shall file a motion in the trial court unless it is

impractical . . . or, if a motion had been filed in the trial court, the reasons given by the trial court for its action.” Wis. Stat. § 809.12.

Courts consider four factors when evaluating a motion for relief pending appeal: “(1) whether the movant makes a strong showing that it is likely to succeed on the merits of the appeal; (2) whether the movant shows that, unless a stay is granted, it will suffer irreparable injury; (3) whether the movant shows that no substantial harm will come to other interested parties; and (4) whether the movant shows that a stay will do no harm to the public interest.” *Waity v. LeMahieu*, 2022 WI 6, ¶ 49, 400 Wis. 2d 356, 388, 969 N.W.2d 263, 278. “At times, this court has also noted that temporary injunctions are to be issued only when necessary to preserve the status quo.” *Id.* (cleaned up, internal citations omitted). “While standards for the granting of temporary and permanent injunctive relief differ, the presence of irreparable injury and inadequate remedy at law are relevant factors to consider in granting either temporary or permanent injunctions for the reason that, ‘(I)f it appears . . . that the plaintiff is not entitled to the permanent injunction which his complaint demands, the court ought not to give him the same relief temporarily.’ Thus, a showing of irreparable injury and inadequate remedy at law is required for a temporary as well as for a permanent injunction.” *Werner v. A. L. Grootemaat & Sons, Inc.*, 80 Wis. 2d 513, 521, 259 N.W.2d 310, 314 (1977) (quoting *Vredenburg v. Safety Devices Corp.*, 270 Wis. 36, 39, 70 N.W.2d 226, 228 (1955)).

In traditional habeas corpus cases, a judge may issue a warrant to remove a prisoner from illegal imprisonment “[w]henever . . . there is good reason to believe that the person will . . . suffer some irreparable

injury.” Wis. Stat. § 782.33. Consequently, the likelihood of irreparable harm should carry the most weight in this Court’s analysis of this case.

ARGUMENT

I. **The beagles are likely to succeed on the merits because Wisconsin law protects them from cruelty and habeas corpus protects from illegal confinement.**

This pivotal question on appeal is whether dogs subjected to illegal and systemic cruelty are categorically barred from obtaining judicial relief from their unlawful confinement through the common law writ of habeas corpus when there is no alternative remedy. As outlined in more detail in Petitioner-Appellant’s Opening Brief (“OB”),² the answer is no, the law does not bar relief from cruelty.

Two principles combine to establish a reasonable probability of success on the merits of the appeal (*Waity*, 2022 WI 6, ¶ 49): the law gives the beagles a right to be free from cruelty, *OB* at pp. 23–25, and habeas corpus exists to vindicate that right by providing a remedy from unlawful confinement when no other adequate remedy is available. *Id.* at pp. 25–27.

Although providing relief in this case requires a novel application of law, the state’s constitution entrusts courts with the responsibility to continue developing the common law through judicial decisions. *Id.* at pp. 39–46; *see* Wis. Const. Art. XIV, § 13; *State v. Picotte*, 2003 WI 42, ¶ 19, 261 Wis. 2d 249, 262, 661 N.W.2d 381, 387 (“[P]roperly construed, Article XIV, Section 13 of the Wisconsin Constitution does not codify

² Petitioner-Appellant incorporates the arguments put forth in its Opening Brief, filed concurrently with this request for injunctive relief.

English common law circa 1776, but rather preserves law that by historical understanding is subject to continuing evolution under the judicial power.”). Here, an updated understanding is warranted to align the common law with nearly two centuries of legal development recognizing that animals are beings legally entitled to protection from cruelty in their own right. *OB* at 29–37.

II. Without temporary relief, the beagles are likely to suffer irreparable injury in the form of unlawful death.

The risk of euthanasia to the beagles at Ridglan is particularly acute at this moment. While Ridglan has reportedly agreed to release 1,500 beagles to rescues and other organizations, hundreds remain. *Ridglan Farms Beagle Deal*. Under Ridglan’s stipulated agreement with the special prosecutor, Ridglan can continue operating under its state license until the July 1 deadline. After that date, dogs that “have not been sold or cannot be used consistently with Ridglan’s USDA licenses” will be “offered for adoption as appropriate or otherwise handled consistent with requirements and limitations of state law.” R.3:408.

Notably, the stipulation does not explicitly prohibit reducing the dog population through culling. The special prosecutor’s report indicates that euthanasia “for economic reasons” is “a reality” of the business. R.3:365. And Ridglan has acknowledged in the past that it kills healthy dogs for business reasons: “we still do occasional culling of retired breeders, dogs that have traits which render them unsellable and occasionally even out sex ratios in older dogs.” R. 3:423.

Ridglan’s counsel failed to respond to a letter sent by counsel for the beagles on February 20, 2026, asking the facility to refrain from

euthanizing any dogs in the absence of medical necessity, during the pendency of this appeal.

Thus, without court intervention, dogs whom Ridglan cannot sell as they adjust their operations to meet the July 1 deadline face a serious risk of unnecessary death—due to profits, not medical necessity.

Killing these dogs would qualify as unjustifiable death in violation of the animal cruelty law. Wis. Stat. § 951.02; Wis. Stat. § 951.01(2). Significantly, rescue organizations have offered to take custody of the dogs and puppies at Ridglan,³ leaving no doubt that killing the dogs for business reasons is “unnecessary” under the cruelty law. *See* Wis. Stat. § 951.01(2) (“‘Cruel’ means causing unnecessary and excessive pain or suffering or unjustifiable injury or death.”).

The irreparable harm prong thus weighs strongly in favor of issuing a temporary injunction pending appeal. Further, this prong should be weighed the most heavily in the Court’s analysis. In traditional habeas corpus cases, a judge may issue a warrant to remove a prisoner from illegal imprisonment when “there is good reason to believe that the person will . . . suffer some irreparable injury.” Wis. Stat. § 782.33. Thus, the above showing of the likelihood of irreparable harm should, in and of itself, be sufficient for this Court to grant a temporary injunction pending appeal.

³ *See* R.3:471–74 (Declaration of John Ramer); R.3:478–80 (Declaration of Elise Traub); R.3:475–77 (Declaration of Heather Owen).

III. Ridglan will not suffer any substantial harm if the temporary injunction pending appeal is granted.

Ridglan will not suffer any substantial harm by having to refrain from medically unnecessary euthanasia during the pendency of appeal. Should Ridglan feel the need to remove a beagle from its facility for a reason other than medical necessity, they can simply work with one of the many rescue organizations who have pledged immediate resources to transfer dogs out of Ridglan. *See* R.3:473-74, 480, 476. This would, in fact, benefit Ridglan as it would avoid the need of expending employee time and resources on conducting unnecessary euthanasia.

IV. The public interest weighs in favor of granting the temporary injunction.

The public interest weighs strongly in favor of disallowing cruel and illegal euthanasia. The public has already demonstrated a vested interest in this case, and this issue:

- Ninety-four percent of surveyed Wisconsinites believe that dogs have a right to be free from cruelty and ninety percent support removing dogs from facilities causing ongoing physical or psychological harm. Raba Research, *Wisconsin Survey*, 2 (2026) (available at <https://perma.cc/YH9B-35X2>).
- Over 6,700 people, and counting, have signed a petition calling on Ridglan to free the beagles held in their custody. Nonhuman Rights Project, *Free the Ridglan Beagles* (2026) (available at <https://perma.cc/7UY4-4RWZ>).

Additionally, several public figures have voiced support for the Ridglan dogs:

- Rep. Mark Pocan urged Ridglan to rehome the beagles and declined a request to help counter activist pressure. Rep. Pocan described Ridglan’s treatment of the beagles as “alarming” and encouraged “the prioritization of safe rehoming to every beagle possible.” Isiah Holmes, *Tensions Rise as Activists, Police Prepare for Second Rescue of Beagles from Facility*, WISCONSIN EXAM’R (Apr. 17, 2026, at 05:45 CT) (available at <https://perma.cc/FJ4K-DVQ2>).
- Rep. Pocan also raised concerns about Ridglan to Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. during a recent House Appropriations Committee hearing. Brandon Taylor, *Pocan, RFK Jr. Clash Over Wisconsin Beagle Facility at House Hearing*, WKOW (Apr. 16, 2026) (available at <https://perma.cc/A72L-GGNV>).
- Lara Trump, a political figure, called on Ridglan to surrender the dogs to loving homes: “I would like to encourage Ridglan Farms, please do the right thing. Please ensure these dogs end up in loving homes. Please take them out of this awful situation. And please take the million dollars.” Bryan Polcyn, *Ridglan Farms Activists Protest at Capitol, Political Figures Weigh In*, FOX6 (Apr. 20, 2026, at 17:26 CT) (available at <https://perma.cc/BA6L-BGXW>).
- Tomi Lahren, another political figure, featured the plight of the Ridglan beagles on her national program and called on Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul to “do something about the #RidglanFarms beagle abuse.” Tomi Lahren (@TomiLahren), X (Apr. 19, 2026, at 10:18 ET) (available at

<https://perma.cc/8FRH-G75H>); *see also* Tomi Lahren (@tomilahren), INSTAGRAM (Apr. 16, 2026), www.instagram.com/reel/DXNWvVQBoYF/.

- Laura Loomer, conservative political activist, called on NIH to cut funding for testing on dogs from Ridgland and stated that she and other organizations had offered to help save and rehome the dogs. Laura Loomer (@LauraLoomer), X (Apr. 20, 2026, at 15:31 ET) (available at <https://perma.cc/NLT5-5K7A>).

Thus, the public's interest is clearly aligned with the incremental step of preventing illegal euthanasia at the facility.

V. A temporary injunction is necessary to maintain the status quo.

Absent an injunction, there is an intolerable risk that Ridgland will euthanize many of the remaining beagles. As the Wisconsin Supreme Court has made clear, it is “within the discretionary power of the court, by a temporary injunction, to preserve the status quo between the parties pending the final decree, if that be necessary in order to make such decree effective or *to save the person claiming relief from irreparable injury by the conduct of his adversary pending the litigation.*” *Valley Iron Works Mfg. Co. v. Goodrick*, 103 Wis. 436, 78 N.W. 1096, 1099 (1899) (emphasis added). *See also De Pauw v. Oxley*, 122 Wis. 656, 100 N.W. 1028 (1904) (“[I]t is well-nigh an imperative duty of the court to preserve the status quo by temporary injunction, if its disturbance pendente lite will render futile in considerable degree the judgment sought, or cause serious and irreparable injury to one party.”).

During the pendency of appeal, the Court should maintain the status quo by prohibiting euthanasia of any dog which is not medically necessary. Euthanasia of the beagles risks rendering any judgment of this Court ineffective and is the paradigmatic example of irreparable injury.

VI. It is impractical to file a motion for temporary injunction pending appeal with the circuit court.

The circuit court previously declined to grant a temporary injunction seeking, among other things, an injunction against medically unnecessary euthanasia. The court incorrectly found that the beagles were unlikely to succeed on the merits and granted Ridglan's motion to dismiss. When explaining its reasoning, the circuit court specifically noted the limited power of trial courts to apply the common law in the novel way sought by the case. App. 13:14–14:16. Thus, it would be futile to seek injunctive relief again in the circuit court.

CONCLUSION

The beagles at Ridglan are entitled to the protections of Wisconsin's animal cruelty law, yet no adequate remedy exists to enforce those protections absent this Court's action. Appellants respectfully request that this Court enter a temporary injunction prohibiting medically unnecessary euthanasia during the pendency of proceedings. Such relief is necessary and appropriate to prevent irreparable harm, prevent cruelty to animals, and ensure the fair administration of justice.

Dated: May 18, 2026

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