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State Auditor Uses GPS Data to Track Apparently Improper Personal Use of State Vehicle

Forty years ago, the Ford Motor Company coined the catchphrase, “Have You Driven a Ford Lately?” Now, we know the answer.

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture administers the Commercial Dog and Cat Inspection Program, which is headed by a Program Manager. The Program Manager’s responsibilities include inspection of animal control facilities, pet shops, boarding kennels, commercial dog and cat breeders, and other related animal facilities.

In addition, the Program Manager is responsible for border checks, which involve patrolling roads and highways near bordering states. His duties occasionally involve traffic stops of vehicles that are transporting animals into the State. He was assigned a State-owned 2017 Ford F-150 truck for the purposes of conducting his responsibilities.

Using data from the State’s Global Positioning System (GPS) device installed in the truck, the Auditor’s Office has taken a deep dive into his driving practices and has now released a report showing in meticulous detail where that vehicle and driver have been. Of the 101 workdays when the State vehicle was used over a 13-month period (July 1, 2024, through July 31, 2025), the audit team identified 47 road trips when improper use of the vehicle appears to have occurred. Total miles of usage of the vehicle (legitimate and improper) were 15,552 over the 13 months reviewed.

For reasons not known to the audit team, another 39 days were identified when the vehicle was simply turned on and off but did not change its location.

Of the 47 road trips with some alleged improper usage, the timesheet completed by the Program Manager noted the vehicle in use for approximately 150 hours. However, the GPS data shows the vehicle in use 100 additional hours. When questioned by the audit team, the Program Manager’s multiple explanations seemed improbable and unreliable.

Because the Program Manager did not have a State procurement card, the auditors obtained his personal bank records and correlated certain debit card purchases to a wide variety of GPS-confirmed locations of the State vehicle.

The report includes 47 maps of the itinerary for each day where the audit team believes there was personal use of the State vehicle. Here is a summary of five such instances of alleged misuse:

- 1) On October 3, 2024, the Program Manager turned on his assigned State vehicle at 9:14 a.m. at his home and idled for over a half hour before making stops at a Bomgaars farm and ranch supply store in Wahoo, NE, a restaurant called Pla Too Thai Cuisine in Omaha, NE, and then the Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall in Gretna, NE. While at the mall, he made a \$66.36 purchase at the TJ Maxx/HomeGoods store and also stopped at the Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming store. Upon departing the mall in the afternoon, he drove to the Ashland Public Library, where he stopped to rest for 36 minutes because he claimed to have felt sick, before arriving back at his personal residence at 4:11 p.m. He reported on his weekly itinerary submitted to the Department that he performed “Border Checks” on this day. However, the itinerary lacked sufficient detail to determine where the “Border Checks” were conducted, and made no mention of the specific stops the audit team observed from the GPS detail records. As a result, the audit team questioned the actual work performed by the Program Manager, as they were unable to verify whether the stops were for Department-related purposes.
- 2) On October 7, 2024, the Program Manager’s workday began at 8:01 a.m. when he drove 140.50 miles from his personal residence to a Fairfield Inn & Suites Hotel in Kearney, NE, where he spent about six hours. After a portion of his stay, he departed in the late afternoon and drove for almost a full hour before arriving at Bill’s Liquor store located about two miles from the hotel. He purchased two bottles of Wyatt Earp Whiskey for \$192.58 before returning to the hotel for 2.26 hours. He then drove home (141 miles) arriving there at 9:47 p.m. His explanation was that he went to the liquor store to use the restroom and purchase a bottle of water. The debit card receipt only shows the liquor purchase and not the water.
- 3) On December 11, 2024, the Program Manager departed his home at 7:29 a.m. and drove for 2.44 hours to the Western Edge clothing store in Grand Island, NE, and spent 4.56 hours there. He then drove 0.62 hours to Bomgaars farm and ranch supply store in Central City, NE, and made a \$61.25 purchase of stock salt, post insulator, cat food, heating pellets, and pine wood shavings, all of which appear to be for personal – not State use. The Program Manager stated that stop at the farm and ranch store was because the store was once licensed by the Department of Agriculture, but the audit team believes the stop was probably for the purchase of the personal items shown in his debit card records.
- 4) On December 16, 2024, the Program Manager departed his home at 8:20 a.m. and after a five-minute stop at a local Casey’s convenience store, he then proceeded to the Sunset Plaza Mall in Norfolk, NE, arriving at 9:45 a.m. While at the mall, he spent approximately 15 minutes visiting a Renegade clothing store and purchased a Men’s Black Melange Henley Pullover at a cost of \$54.56. The Program Manager said the stop at the clothing store was for “stretching” and a restroom break.
- 5) On March 6, 2025, the Program Manager departed from his home at 11:38 a.m. After stopping at a gas station in Valparaiso, NE, and patrolling on Highway 81 near Bruning, NE, he drove the State vehicle into Geneva, NE. While in Geneva, he spent nearly three quarters of an hour at an apparent family member’s residence before stopping for about an hour at a local restaurant called the Overtime Grill & Lounge, where he spent \$43.88 with a personal debit card. On his weekly itinerary submitted to the Department, he reported he was working in the office. However, there is no indication on the GPS detail records examined by the audit team that the Program Manager stopped at the office on that day.

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