

## First class action suit of its kind brought against puppy dealer

Lynne Marek/Staff reporter  
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The Humane Society of the United States and Weil, Gotshal & Manges have filed what they believe to be the first class-action lawsuit against a U.S. puppy dealer, alleging that the company sold puppies with genetic defects and contagious parasitic infections and failed to reimburse customers for the sick animals or their medical problems.

Weil, Gotshal, led by New York litigator Paul Ferrillo, filed the lawsuit on a pro bono basis on behalf of the Humane Society in Broward County Circuit Court against the south Florida-based Wizard of Claws. The lawsuit so far represents about 100 class members, said Jonathan Lovvorn, who heads up the Humane Society's litigation department. Each representative will have damages of \$2,000 to \$5,000, making the lawsuit worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, he said.

The sale of sick and dying puppies to customers who were unable to receive reimbursement for either the price of the sick dogs or veterinary treatments that sometimes cost thousands of dollars violated Florida animal and consumer protection laws, the Human Society said. The lawsuit seeks unspecified compensatory damages and injunctive relief against the further sale of puppies by Wizard of Claws.

A Web site for Pembroke Pines, Florida-based Wizard of Claws shows photos of various breeds of puppies for sale. All puppies are checked by a veterinarian and "all our attention goes to their well being," the site says. The company says it "backs up our puppies 100 percent." A Wizard of Claws representative declined comment and referred calls to owner James Anderson, who was not available.

Ferrillo, who was drawn to the case in part by his affection for his Jack Russell terrier, investigated the puppy dealer and brought the case with help from a team of about a dozen lawyers in the Weil Gotshal's Miami and New York offices in addition to Humane Society attorneys.

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