



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

## Fact Sheet: Puppy Mills and Pet Stores

**A majority of Americans has pets.** About 47 percent of households in the United States own at least one dog and about 46 percent own a cat. Only about 30 percent of pets in homes come from shelters or rescues. 2.7 million adoptable dogs and cats are euthanized in shelters every year.<sup>1</sup>

**Pet store puppies come from puppy mills.** Responsible breeders do not sell their puppies to pet stores because they want to meet their puppy buyers in person—and a majority of national breed clubs' Codes of Ethics prohibit or discourage their members from selling their dogs to pet stores. The suppliers of pet store puppies are largely “puppy mills,” commercial facilities that mass-produce puppies for sale. The Humane Society of the United States conducted several hidden-camera investigations<sup>2</sup> which revealed that many of the breeding facilities that supply pet stores are mills.

**Puppies sold in pet stores come from all over the country—and many come from breeders with one or more Animal Welfare Act violations.** Some breeders found selling to pet stores have a record of repeat violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act. USDA inspection reports contained reports of significant violations, including sick and injured dogs who had not been treated by a vet, underweight dogs, puppies with their feet falling through the wire floors, puppies with severe eye deformities, piles of feces and food contaminated by mold and insects.

**Pet stores often do not disclose the origin of the puppies they sell.** Most pet stores do not disclose the true origins of their puppies, instead using deceptive sales pitches about “USDA licensed” or “professional” breeders. Unfortunately, the federal Animal Welfare Act provides survival standards for dogs, not humane care standards. The USDA has repeatedly asserted that their regulations and standards are *minimum* requirements.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the agency's own Animal Welfare Act Fact Sheet<sup>4</sup> states *“Although Federal requirements establish acceptable standards, they are not ideal. Regulated businesses are encouraged to exceed the specified minimum standards.”*

**Puppies sold at pet stores often have serious health or psychological problems.** Some of the illnesses common to pet store puppies include zoonotic diseases which can be spread to other pets and humans. Buyers are often faced with enormous vet bills or even the death of the puppy within days or weeks of purchase. A puppy may seem healthy for months only to develop symptoms of serious congenital conditions much later. These health problems are often the result of poor breeding at puppy mills.

**Pet stores do not have to sell puppies to be successful.** More than 2,300 pet stores nationwide have signed an HSUS pledge not to sell puppies,<sup>5</sup> demonstrating that it is possible to have a successful pet-related business without supporting puppy mills.

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<sup>1</sup> “Pets by the Numbers”: U.S. pet-ownership estimates from the APPA for 2012. Can be found at:

[http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet\\_overpopulation/facts/pet\\_ownership\\_statistics.html#.U2EF81VdWAg](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/facts/pet_ownership_statistics.html#.U2EF81VdWAg)

<sup>2</sup> Chicagoland Pet Store Investigation Links Dozens of Puppy Sellers to Puppy Mills. Dec. 2012. Can be found at:

[http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/puppy\\_mills/report-hsus-chicago-pet-stores-2012investigates.pdf](http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/puppy_mills/report-hsus-chicago-pet-stores-2012investigates.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See 7 U.S.C. § 2143(A)(8), stating that the federal Animal Welfare Act does not preempt state laws.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service, “Fact Sheet: Animal Care. The Animal Welfare Act,” in <http://ca-biomed.org/pdf/media-kit/oversight/USDAAWA.pdf> (accessed 5 Dec, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Puppy Friendly Pet Stores. 2013. Can be found at:

[http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/puppy\\_mills/facts/puppy\\_friendly\\_pet\\_stores.html#.U2ErT1VdWAg](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/puppy_mills/facts/puppy_friendly_pet_stores.html#.U2ErT1VdWAg)