

[F A C T S H E E T]

Dog and Puppy Import Issues

The HSUS has received complaints from buyers who purchased puppies that they were led to believe were born in the U.S., only to find out after receiving registration papers or having problems with the dog that their puppies were imported from overseas. Some of these animals reportedly suffered from diseases such as pneumonia, parvovirus, and/or severe congenital defects. These puppies were sold at approximately 8 weeks of age and, if imported, could not have been properly quarantined for rabies.

According to the CDC, its only concern with imported pets involves rabies and other zoonotic diseases. Because puppies under 3 months of age are too young to be vaccinated for rabies, they may be imported without the vaccination. However, the CDC requires the importer to complete a confinement agreement (form CDC 75.37) agreeing to confine the animal until he/she is old enough to be vaccinated, *and in addition* to confine the animal for 30 days after vaccination. This would mean that most imported puppies would not be eligible for sale until at least 4 months of age, but complaints indicate that they are routinely imported and sold at a much younger age.

In conversations with HSUS staff, the CDC acknowledged that untold numbers of dogs, puppies, and other pets are imported without their knowledge and that they do not have the staff or resources to regulate the problem successfully. The CDC does not have law enforcement powers and can't screen every flight or shipment. When violations are found, the CDC can only issue a warning, except in extreme cases in which law enforcement can be called in.

The CDC does not require general certificates of health for pets who enter the United States, although many state laws require them.

Facts and Figures:

- According to CDC representatives, dogs are most commonly imported from Russia, Ukraine and Hungary, as well as South Korea, Colombia, and Mexico.
- Some of the biggest ports of entry for imported dogs are:
 - NY's JFK Airport (from Eastern Europe)
 - Chicago (from Eastern Europe)
 - Los Angeles (from Asia)
 - The El Paso, Texas border and other communities on the Mexican border
- A recent CBS news story reported that, at JFK airport alone, approximately 7,000 puppies are imported annually. Many arrive in poor condition or are dead on arrival.
- A 2005 Border Puppy Task Force study estimated that 10,000 puppies are entering San Diego County from Mexico annually. Many of them were smuggled in without health records or vaccinations. Many of the puppies carry contagious diseases, are infested with parasites, are too young to be weaned, and/or die shortly after arrival. Common diseases included distemper, rabies, parvovirus and ringworm.
- Many airlines require health certificates for animals who fly, and have regulations restricting the minimum age of puppies to be flown and the temperatures at which they can be flown. However, these rules can all be waived if a veterinary certificate states that the animal is fit to fly. It is believed that veterinary certificates are easy to fake or to obtain on a "rubber stamp" basis.



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Cases:

- In April 2007, The HSUS received a complaint that a buyer was sold a puppy in Florida that she was told was "AKC." The puppy was very ill with distemper and severe coccidia and had to be euthanized at 12 weeks of age. Later, the buyer received Argentinean registration papers for the puppy. The seller of the puppy is believed to have imported many sick puppies from South America and is the subject of numerous lawsuits.
- In 2007, The HSUS received complaints regarding a Texas "breeder" who is selling English bulldogs over the Internet that are imported from Russia. The breeder had sold a dog with a false health certificate to one constituent. The dog was very ill and later died. Another complainant received a 12-week-old puppy who was very ill with parvovirus. The buyer later received registration papers indicating the sick puppy was from Russia.
- In 2007, The HSUS received a complaint about a breeder/dealer in Texas who has a history of multiple complaints for selling sick dogs. He is believed to be importing dogs from Ireland.
- In 2006, The HSUS interviewed several buyers who were sold bulldog puppies from a "breeding program" in Pennsylvania. The buyers were unaware until after purchase that their puppies were imported from Russia. The puppies suffered from a number of disorders including pneumonia, mange, seizures, and congenital disorders. At least one of the puppies died. The puppies were sold at 8 weeks of age.
- In two separate incidents in April 2006, California Border Patrol agents found a total of 35 puppies hidden under car seats at border crossings. Many of the puppies were infested with parasites, dehydrated, and too weak to stand.
- In March 2006, California Border Patrol agents found 26 underage puppies stuffed in a duffel bag in a car crossing the border from Mexico into California.
- According to the San Diego Humane Society, sickly and underage puppies from Mexico are routinely sold in parking lots and by roadsides in CA, TX, and other states near the border. Many become sick or die very soon after purchase.