

# Puppy Mill Lesson Plan

What is a puppy mill?

Grade: 6-12

Time Needed: The lesson can be completed in 45 minutes.

## Character Concept

Good citizens will stay informed of animal-related community issues and know that changes can be made through the legislative process. Companion animals are a commitment and deserve proper care.

## Objective

Students will identify the basic needs associated with caring for a dog. Students will understand what a puppy mill is and recognize how the basic needs of these animals are not being met. Students will identify legal actions that can be taken to stop puppy mills and help strengthen animal cruelty laws, including developing letters to legislators and newspaper editors.

## National Standards

-Language Arts/ English (Evaluation Strategies, Communication Skills, Communication Strategies, Evaluating Data, Participating in Society, Applying Language Skills, NL-ENG.K-12.3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12)  
-Social Sciences (Civic Life, Politics, Government, Principles of Democracy, Roles of the Citizen NSS-C.5-8.1,3,5 and NSS-C.9-12.1,3,5)

## Materials Needed

- Computer and video clips pertaining to puppy mills (use [www.video.hsus.org](http://www.video.hsus.org))
  - Peddling Puppy Mills (Pets of BelAir) <http://video.hsus.org/>
  - Mill Investigation:  
[http://www.hsus.org/pets/pets\\_related\\_news\\_and\\_events/virginia\\_the\\_next](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pets_related_news_and_events/virginia_the_next)
  - Press Room/ Virginia Puppy Mills/ Media-B Roll (This is a very short clip.)  
[www.video.hsus.org](http://www.video.hsus.org), go to "Press Room" and click on "Pets."
- Books and resources about the needs of dogs.  
Recommended Books:
  - The Dog Bible by Tracie Hotchner
  - The Dog Care Book: All You Need to Know to Keep Your
  - Dog Healthy and Happy by Sheldon L. V.M.D. Gerstenfeld
  - DOG (Eyewitness Books) by Juliet Clutton-Brock
  - Understanding Your Dog by Dr. Michael W. Fox (chapter 2)
- Resources
  - HSUS Dog Behavior Tip Sheets [http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet\\_care/our\\_pets\\_for\\_life\\_program/dog\\_behavior\\_tip\\_sheets/](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/dog_behavior_tip_sheets/)
  - Puppy Buying Tips Sheet [http://stoppupmills.org/puppy\\_buying\\_tips.html](http://stoppupmills.org/puppy_buying_tips.html)
  - Canine Chronicles Newspaper and Puppy Buyers Guide Newspaper  
[http://stoppupmills.org/campaign\\_gear.html](http://stoppupmills.org/campaign_gear.html)
- Writing paper
- Small pieces of scrap paper
- Writing utensils
- Markers
- Current laws concerning animal cruelty (State laws can be found at [http://www.hsus.org/webfiles/PDF/state\\_cruelty\\_chart.pdf](http://www.hsus.org/webfiles/PDF/state_cruelty_chart.pdf) and federal legislation at <http://www.hsus.org/webfiles/PDF/legislation/CRS-07-animal-protection-fed-statutes.pdf>.)
- Address of legislator and/or newspaper (Legislators can be found using <https://community.hsus.org/humane/leg-lookup/search.html>.)

- Large paper with a dog drawn on it
- Highlighters
- Venn diagram

## Lesson Procedure

### Preparation

1. Have video clip downloaded and ready to play.
2. Collect needed books and resources.
3. Find state and federal laws concerning animal cruelty (State laws can be found at [http://www.hsus.org/web-files/PDF/state\\_cruelty\\_chart.pdf](http://www.hsus.org/web-files/PDF/state_cruelty_chart.pdf) and federal legislation at <http://www.hsus.org/web-files/PDF/legislation/CRS-07-animal-protection-fed-statutes.pdf>.) Use this information to create note cards of current laws and whether the offense is considered as a felony or a misdemeanor.
4. Post the index cards in various places in the room.
5. Have address of state and federal legislators. (Legislators can be found using <https://community.hsus.org/humane/leg-lookup/search.html>.)

### Opening or Activating Strategy

Begin the class with the large paper posted in the front of the room. The educator will ask the students to brainstorm -in a 3 or 4 minute “marker talk”- what a dog will need to be truly happy. (A “marker talk” is when the students are given a set amount of time to think and respond to a question. They write their responses on a large poster in the front of the room. No one may speak and spelling is not key in the “marker talk”; the ideas generated are important. Educators may guide with general ideas to help the students begin.)

The items written on the poster will include things such as water, food, shelter, health care, toys, collar, leash, blanket, bed, love, exercise, etc.

At the end of the 4 minute “marker talk” the class will read through what was written and hang the poster up explaining that the poster will be an important reference for the rest of the lesson.

### Lesson Body

1. Distribute a piece of scrap paper to each student. Tell students that they will be watching a video clip including footage of a puppy mill. Ask students to think about the following questions as they watch the video clips:
  - What is the definition of a puppy mill?
  - Are the needs of these animals being met?
  - Are any laws being broken?
2. Ask students to view the video clip. Ask students to write down obvious problem areas in dog care and any area(s) that need clarification for later discussion.

Upon completion of the video clip, ask students to share any areas in which more clarification is needed and then answer the question "What is the definition of a puppy mill?" (Question 1)

3. Distribute a Venn diagram to students. Students will be asked to compare and contrast the ideal conditions (refer to those on the large poster) with those in the video clip. Items that are present in both areas should be written in the middle of the Venn diagram. (The educator can allow the students to work individually or in pairs.) This should take about 5 or 6 minutes.



Draw a large Venn diagram on the board and filled in as the class discusses what they saw and what each pair or individual has written. Determine with students if the dogs in the video clip have all of their needs met. (The answer will always be no- no clean water, no exercise, no bed, small living quarters, no health care, etc.)

Many students will want to know what they can do to help. This is where the next portion of the project begins.

4. Ask students to move around the room to read current state and national laws pertaining to puppy mills and animal cruelty. This reading should take about 6 minutes. Once the laws have been read, bring the class together to discuss whether these laws are strong enough and to brainstorm ways to help stop animal cruelty. (You can provide each student with a copy of the laws that were around the room for future reference.)

Spend 5 minutes brainstorming with students ways to stop the suffering of dogs in puppy mills. This list may include:

- Write to the legislators for stronger laws
- Create stronger punishments for those who violate laws
- Write to the newspaper
- Educate others about not buying from pet stores

(Note: Be prepared for student ideas such as “Break in and steal the puppies.” With kind redirection from you, the students will focus on legal options.)

Optional: (Invite a special guest, such as a rescue worker or owner with a former puppy mill dog into the classroom. If you include a guest you will need extra time to complete the activities.)

5. Ask students to create letters to be sent to one of their legislators. (Visit [www.humanesociety.org/leglookup](http://www.humanesociety.org/leglookup) and type in the zip code to find out who your lawmakers are. Check out Humane Society Youth's [Mission: Humane Action Guide](#) for letter-writing tips.) In letters the students should explain how puppy mills do not meet the needs of the animals, detail the poor health of puppies which causes financial burden and emotional distress to their owners, and ask legislators to support stronger laws against mills.

Note: Students can use [http://www.hsus.org/legislation\\_laws/state\\_legislation/puppy\\_mill\\_laws\\_where\\_does\\_yo.html](http://www.hsus.org/legislation_laws/state_legislation/puppy_mill_laws_where_does_yo.html) and <http://www.hsus.org/web-files/PDF/legislation/puppy-mill-laws-chart.pdf> to see state laws related to mills and [http://www.hsus.org/legislation\\_laws/state\\_legislation/enacted\\_and\\_vetoed\\_state\\_legislation.html](http://www.hsus.org/legislation_laws/state_legislation/enacted_and_vetoed_state_legislation.html) to see if lawmakers have recently helped to pass or support laws against mills.

### *Closure or Wrap-up*

Thank the students for all of their hard work and ask them to recall why puppy mills, pet stores, classified ads and internet sites are not the best place to get a pet. (Sick animals, animals are treated poorly, etc.) Remind the class that a local rescue or shelter has fabulous adoptable animals and many of them are purebred dogs and cats. The books and other resources listed in the materials section can be suggested to students who want to learn more about choosing a companion animal. Collect letters and mail them to the appropriate party. Many times the students will receive a response from the legislators and will be thrilled!

### *Extension Activity*

Students could write a letter to the editor of a local news paper or create an educational pamphlet or Public Service Announcement about the above topics.