
An Advocate's Guide to Stopping Puppy Mills



Table of Contents

Letters to the Editor	1
Sponsoring a Stop Puppy Mills Ad or Billboard.....	2
Internet Activism.....	3
Creative Outreach – Classified Ads and the Public	5
Help Stop Puppy Mills Through Legislation	6
Ordinances – A Guide to Using Local Ordinances to Combat Puppy Mills	6
Puppy Friendly Pet Stores program	7
Puppy-Selling Pet Stores	8
Organizing and Leading Peaceful Pet Store Demonstrations	10
If You Suspect A Poorly Run Breeding Facility	13
Other Ways To Help Stop Puppy Mills	14

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are a good way to educate readers about the reality of puppy mills and how to avoid supporting them. In general, letters are more likely to be published when in response to an article the paper or magazine has already run. However, smaller local papers run letters about subjects of concern to their readers and communities. Letters should be brief – most papers prefer 250 words or fewer, and word limits are usually printed somewhere in the papers’ “letters” section. Below are bullet points you may want to consider including in a letter to the editor and a pre-written sample you can use as guide.

Puppy Mill Facts:

- Two to four million puppies are born in puppy mills each year in the U.S.
- Parent dogs are kept in cages for their entire lives, breeding litter after litter and in most cases never setting foot outside of a cage.
- Puppy mill puppies are most commonly sold in pet stores, over the Internet, and through newspaper classified ads.
- Puppy mills treat dogs badly. Documented conditions include over-breeding, wire cages, little to no veterinary care, poor quality and/or lack of food and water, no protection from the elements, no socialization outside the cage, killing “low producing” dogs.
- Puppy mill puppies are transported hundreds of miles to be sold in pet stores or to unsuspecting Internet buyers.
- The only way to stop puppy mills is to stop buying the puppies.
- The best place to look for a puppy is your local animal shelter. Nationwide, one out of every four dogs in a shelter is a purebred, and mixed-breed dogs also make wonderful pets.
- Rescue groups exist for virtually every breed of dog.

Sample Letter (Holiday themed)

Dear Editor:

I would like to warn readers not to put animal cruelty on their shopping lists this year. The holidays are a busy season for puppy sales. But when you purchase puppies over the Internet, through newspaper ads, or at pet stores, you are often unknowingly supporting a puppy mill.

Puppy mills are inhumane breeding facilities that produce puppies in large numbers. They are designed to maximize profits and commonly disregard the physical, social, and emotional health of the dogs. The “breeding dogs” at puppy mills live their entire lives in cages, and poor conditions often lead to severe physical and behavioral problems for the puppies they produce.

The best way to stop cruel puppy mills is to stop supporting them. If you’re adding a canine companion to your family, visit your local animal shelter or find a reputable breeder and insist on visiting their premises in person to see how and where your puppy’s mother is living.

By patronizing a responsible breeder, shelter or rescue group, you can help defeat the inhumane puppy mill system that places profit above animal welfare. Readers can look up local shelters and breed rescue groups at www.petfinder.org. A checklist of good breeder characteristics is available at humanesociety.org/puppy. People who love dogs should help prevent animal cruelty by making sure they aren’t supporting a puppy mill!

Sponsoring a Stop Puppy Mills Ad or Billboard

An ad or billboard is an easy way to educate thousands of people in your area about the cruelty of puppy mills. With your help, we can steer dog lovers in a better direction and stop their unwitting support of this cruel industry. The HSUS has a program designed to minimize costs to individual groups by providing pre-designed art at no charge. The individual or group then pays the costs of publishing the ad or renting the billboard or other outdoor space.

I want to sponsor a billboard in my area. How do I start?

Send an email to stoppupmills@humane.org stating:

- 1. Your zip code and/or a description of the local area where you would like to see the billboard located [Example: "In Pembroke Pines, Florida near Taft Street."].
- 2. The exact location of the billboard, if you have seen one that you have in mind.
- 3. An estimate of your budget or your group's available budget.
- 4. Any information you have on the company that owns the billboard (usually listed on the silver "frame" of the board.)



How much does a billboard cost?

Billboard prices vary enormously depending on the location, prominence, size, and the length of time the billboard will be on display. Prices range from about \$1,000 for a small billboard in a less-costly area, to tens of thousands of dollars a month for billboards on major highways.

I can't afford to sponsor a billboard. Are there other options?

Yes! Other options in your area, such as public transportation advertising or print advertising, could cost well under \$500. These options are great ways to reach many people in a way that can be even more effective than a billboard since they often allow the public more time to read them (sitting on a bus or reading a newspaper) and the lower cost can enable the ads to remain in place longer.

If you have located a good advertising placement in your area (example: a bus shelter near a major puppy store), please feel free to find out more about the costs and then contact us with your idea. If the location is available and you or your group would like to sponsor it, The HSUS can handle production and artwork details. Contact us at stoppupmills@humane.org.

May I provide my own design or photo?

The HSUS supplies professional, pre-designed artwork and covers all production costs. This greatly reduces expenses. In some cases, it may be possible to insert a "sponsored by" line with your name or your group's name.

Is it tax-deductible? How would I pay?

When a location and budget have been discussed, the sponsor will send a check made payable to the Puppy Mill Education Fund (care of The Humane Society of the United States, Puppy Mills Campaign, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037). This donation will be used to sponsor the ad or billboard and is tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

Internet Activism

Puppy millers are increasingly relying on Internet sales to hide the true nature of their business. Thousands of puppies are sold each year through Internet classified ads or direct website sales. Pet lovers who are uninformed about puppy mills often think nothing of buying a dog from a “breeder’s” website, having no idea that the cute photos and misleading statements on a website often have no basis in reality. You can help steer consumers away from puppy mills by being a voice in online communities.

Seek out the Sites

Keep an eye on websites where puppies are offered for sale. Not all of them will allow postings from the general public, but if you see such ads (for example, in a neighborhood forum or an online classified service for your local newspaper), do what you can to help steer people in the right direction. Be polite and seek to inform, not accuse. A sample posting may read:

A puppy is not a sweater! The Humane Society of the United States recommends never buying a puppy over the Internet. To avoid puppy mills, always visit your breeder in person. For more information, go to humanesociety.org/puppy

Have you checked the shelter? Before buying a puppy, please remember there are many animals including purebreds waiting for homes at your local animal shelter or breed rescue group. For more information, go to www.petfinder.org or humanesociety.org/puppy

Personalize Your E-mail Signature or Website

Most people send thousands of e-mails a year. Your e-mail signature can help spread the word, even when your online activities are not directly involved in puppy mills. Personalize your signature with a Stop Puppy Mills message and a link to: humanesociety.org/pupppymills.

Be a Voice in the Online Community

The Internet is also a great way to reach animal lovers and help educate them in a friendly way—before they make the mistake of buying a puppy from a bad breeder. Get active in Internet newsgroups and online communities that center on your areas of interest: for example, join a group that focuses on a particular breed with which you have experience. Use your knowledge to help educate others who are thinking about buying a dog. Let them know where they can find rescue groups that specialize in that breed, or direct them to The HSUS’s Good Breeder Checklist at: humanesociety.org/goodbreeder.

Blogger Outreach

Have friends who blog? See if they’d be willing to allow you to “guest” blog about an issue you are passionate about. If it’s the holiday season or a holiday like Valentine’s Day, ask if you can blog about the importance of not buying pets as gifts. Contact us if you need help drafting a guest blog!

Comment on Media Websites

Many online newspapers allow visitors to comment after articles on their websites. If you see a story involving puppy mills or pet stores that sell dogs, use your online comments to spread the word about alternatives such as breed rescue groups and animal shelters. Include a link to humanesociety.org/pupppymills.



Friend us on Facebook and MySpace and follow us on Twitter

<http://www.facebook.com/humanesociety>

<http://groups.myspace.com/HSUSPuppyMillsCampaign>

<http://twitter.com/HumaneSociety>

Creative Outreach – Classified Ads and the Public

Need to be convinced of the power of a classified ad? Take a look in the “Pets” section of your local newspaper. You’ll likely find column after column of puppies for sale. Take notice over a few weeks and you’ll be able to identify trends in breeds as well. Placing a classified advertisement is a good way to educate buyers about the dangers of puppy mills at a small expense. You may even be able to have the ad run for free.

Because of the revenue generated by pets-for-sale ads, it’s unlikely you’ll be able to get the newspaper to stop running them entirely, but you may be able to get them to run an educational ad to help people find out if they are working with a reputable breeder.

Contact the classified advertisement department to educate them about the dangers of puppy mills and the use of classified newspaper advertising by unscrupulous breeders.

Below are sample classified ads

Buying A Puppy? Get tips for finding a good breeder at humanesociety.org/puppy

[Insert Breed Name] Be sure you’re getting top quality puppies, free good breeder checklist at humanesociety.org/puppy

Don’t risk buying a sick puppy, get info on finding a good breeder at humanesociety.org/puppy

Looking for top quality puppies? Don’t be fooled by a bad breeder. humanesociety.org/puppy

You can also list a phone number and leave an informational phone message on your machine/voicemail. An example script is:

Thank you for calling about our ad for [Insert Breed Name] puppies. We want to help you avoid buying a sickly puppy from a puppy mill or bad breeder. You can find a checklist for identifying a reputable dog breeder at humanesociety.org/puppy



Help Stop Puppy Mills Through Legislation

Federal Legislators – U.S. House of Representatives Member and Senators

Let your member of the U.S. House of Representatives and two U.S. senators know that puppy mills are an important issue to you. Ask that they support laws to improve conditions in puppy mills and that they urge the USDA to strongly enforce the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act.

Senators can be contacted at: The Honorable {Senator Name}, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510; Representatives can be contacted at: The Honorable {Representative Name}, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515. Or call Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121.

State Legislators

Encourage state legislators to pass laws that require commercial breeders to provide humane care to the animals, and cap the number of dogs who can be kept at any one facility. Ask them to require that puppy mills be inspected by the state and regulated like any other business, and to ensure that they are collecting sales tax and paying income tax. Stress that this is not an attempt to stop breeding or regulate small, hobby breeders but rather larger operations that breed many dogs. In many states, most of these operations are not regulated or inspected by any state or federal agency. Also ask that they strengthen the state's cruelty laws to allow for tougher prosecutions of those who abuse animals.

Find elected officials, including governors, state legislators, and more at www.congress.org or humanesociety.org/leglookup.

And be sure to join our online community at humanesociety.org to receive notices and alerts about bills that are introduced in your state. We also have state-specific Facebook groups in many states, to help you become even more involved.

Ordinances – A Guide to Using Local Ordinances to Combat Puppy Mills

Animal-friendly communities throughout the country are finding creative ways to combat puppy mill cruelty. Many communities have enacted ordinances directed at reducing the suffering of dogs in puppy mills by regulating either the puppy mills or pet stores themselves or the manner in which puppies are sold. Make use of this guide which is designed to help you work toward the passage of local laws in your own community that will improve the lives of dogs in puppy mills.

Download: "A Guide to Using Local Ordinances to Combat Puppy Mills"
www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/puppy_mills/ordinance_guide.pdf

Puppy Friendly Pet Stores program

Take Action In Your Community

Join us in applauding pet stores that do not sell puppies and encouraging stores who do sell puppies to stop!

Is your local pet store puppy-friendly? View the complete state-by-state list of Puppy Friendly Pet Stores at humanesociety.org/puppystores.

Help The HSUS sign up pet stores to the Puppy Friendly Pet Stores program, which encourages store owners to implement a “puppy friendly” policy by refusing to sell puppies. Stores that already do not sell puppies can sign up to show that they are taking a stand against puppy mills and to make “official” their policy of not selling puppies. Stores that do sell puppies should be encouraged to help end pet overpopulation by stopping the sale of puppies and supporting their local shelters and pet adoption programs instead.

Stores that sign up will be listed on The HSUS’s website, and they will also receive free display materials and educational flyers for their customers on adopting a pet or finding a responsible dog breeder.

You can help sign up stores in your community by taking a few simple steps:

- Email us at stoppupmills@humanesociety.org with your name, email address, phone number, city, and state. Or, fill out the online form: <http://TinyUrl.com/puppyadvocate>.
- Start visiting your local pet store(s) to explain the benefits of the program and invite them to sign on.
- Return the signed pledge to the puppy mills campaign and we will do the rest!

WE  **PUPPIES**
THAT'S WHY WE DON'T SELL THEM!

Many pet stores that do sell puppies are propping up puppy mills, which churn out huge numbers of dogs under inhumane conditions. Likewise, a consumer who purchases one of these puppies just pumps more money back into the abusive trade.

We have signed The Humane Society of the United States Puppy-friendly Pet Stores pledge. We don't support puppy mills, and we hope you won't either. For information about how to find a dog who doesn't come from one of these cruel factories, visit

humanesociety.org/puppy



PLEASE SUPPORT
YOUR LOCAL SHELTER



Puppy-Selling Pet Stores

Is there a pet store near you that you suspect is selling puppy mill dogs? There are steps you can take to find out more.

Identify the Suppliers

Movement of animals across state lines usually requires filing certain documents with a specific state agency. In most states these records are filed and stored within the Department of Agriculture or Department of Health. The individual state laws that enable citizens to see these records are referred to as Open Records laws or Right to Know laws and are similar to (or may also be referred to as) the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). For information on your state visit www.nfoic.org/state-foi-laws.

It's a little different in every state, but you can make an open records request by mail, or call the Department of Agriculture or Department of Health, Division of Animal Industry (or similar), and ask if you can make an appointment to look at and copy some *health certificate import records*. Depending on the state and how busy their office is, you may have to fill out a form or request an appointment. You'll need cash or check to pay for copying or related costs. If possible, plan to stay more than an hour or longer because there may be hundreds of records! Starting with the most recent records you can find connected to the pet store(s), copy as many as needed. Combined with publically available USDA inspection reports, these documents can be used as the base of your research on the store's suppliers.

Or, you can visit the pet store and politely and respectfully inquire about the puppies and from where they come. You will most likely be told that the puppies come from "private breeders" or "USDA licensed breeders." Indicating a specific puppy or two, ask if you can see the paperwork so you can learn more about the puppy. Make note of the name and general location of the breeder. If asked to leave by the store's management, please do so and respect their decision to keep supplier information private.

Do Your Research

Find out if the breeder(s) are licensed with the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal Care Division. You may call the USDA/APHIS headquarters for assistance at (301) 734-7833; however, inspection reports for USDA facilities are available online at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/efoia. Contact The HSUS if you need further help.

If the breeders you have identified are not licensed with the USDA, find out if they are licensed and inspected by your state. In some states, the state Department of Agriculture inspects kennels or breeders. In states such as PA and MO that have such programs, you may be able to request copies of the state inspection reports in addition to the USDA's.

Do an Internet search to find out more about the breeders or store.

Contact your local humane society, shelter, and Better Business Bureau to see if they have had complaints about the store or its puppies.

Gather information from individuals who may have purchased sick puppies at the store. If you represent an organization, you may want to talk with your local shelter to see if they are willing to refer complainants to you. Ask complainants to fill out the Pet Seller Complaint Form at humanesociety.org/pupmills or print out extra copies of the form and provide them to complainants.



Share Your Results

Put together your findings. Is the pet store dealing with unlicensed breeders? Are they selling puppies from large-scale commercial breeders while claiming that they do not sell puppy mill dogs? Do you have inspection reports on some of the breeders or brokers indicating violations of the Animal Welfare Act? Have you or someone you know purchased a sick puppy at the store? Write a concise summary of your findings.

Contact a local investigative reporter and pitch the story. Let them know that you have exclusive information about the pet store. Contact only one reporter at a time; many reporters will not respond to a query if it has been copied and sent to multiple outlets.

Send a copy of your research to: The Humane Society of the United States, Attn: Puppy Mills, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Organizing and Leading Peaceful Pet Store Demonstrations

Well-implemented pet store demonstrations educate the general public about where pet store puppies come from and also generate support for adopting homeless animals from shelters and rescue groups.

The Puppy Mills Campaign of the Humane Society of the United States encourages you to do your homework, prepare, and take action lawfully and peacefully so that your demonstration can be successful.

How do I know if I am staying within the law and being peaceful?

Permits — your most important task in planning and carrying out a demonstration is to ensure that you do not violate any local ordinances. Contact your local police department and ask whether a permit is needed to demonstrate in your area. Not all localities require a permit, but they are usually easy to obtain, if needed. Your

local authorities will advise you about procedures that should be followed, such as where you are legally allowed to stand (generally, this is on the public sidewalk). The same precautions should be taken if the pet store is in a mall.



The HSUS/Chad Sisneros

Conduct — be positive, polite, knowledgeable, and interact with the public in a respectful manner about why this is an important issue. Do not stand in the street, block entrances or exits or prevent customers from entering the store or store’s parking lot. Do not engage with anyone who approaches you in a violent or accusatory tone.

Your message — because you want to avoid libel, do not make statements about the store that you do not know to be true—make sure that you have proper supporting documentation for any statements that you make. Because state laws vary, The HSUS encourages you to concentrate on stores for which you have documentation and to consult with a local attorney before carrying out your demonstration.

What kind of research is needed before I begin demonstrating?

Set up a meeting with or send a letter to the pet store owner to make sure she or he is aware of the reason you intend to conduct a demonstration. You can propose that the store discontinue selling puppies and instead host adoption events for shelters and rescue groups. Many pet stores are making this humane change and creating a positive example of corporate responsibility for other businesses to follow. For more on how to work with pet stores see The HSUS’s Puppy Friendly Pet Stores program, included in this kit.

Conduct Internet research to find out more about the store and its suppliers. Ideally, you will want to know where a pet store obtains its puppies. In most states, stores are not required to give out information identifying their suppliers. Contact your local humane society, shelter, and Better Business Bureau to see if they have had complaints about the store or its puppies. If you choose to obtain the information yourself, see “Puppy-Selling Pet Stores” included in this kit. If you choose to demonstrate at a pet store without having up-to-date documentation, stick to generic messaging promoting adoption over purchase.

Gather information from individuals who may have purchased sick puppies at the store. Ask complainants to fill out the Pet Seller Complaint Form at humanesociety.org/pupmills or print out extra copies of the form and provide them to complainants.

Whom can I get to join me in these demonstrations?

Mobilize individuals for your demonstration by networking with friends, co-workers, local animal activist groups, and local animal shelters. One of the most effective methods of networking is via the Internet. Websites such as Facebook.com and Meetup.com are great places to make contacts and garner support for your demonstration.

Where can I get posters and materials to hand out?

You can make your own materials or you can purchase educational materials from The HSUS or other organizations. A variety of handmade and professionally printed signage makes a good impression on passersby. Make sure your sign text is visible from a distance and most importantly that your message is clear. Along with educational materials, you may want to create a handout with a list of animals that are currently available for adoption in shelters in your area. You should also use a signup sheet so that you have contact information for those in attendance.



Can I get the local media to come to the demonstration?

To maximize exposure of the issue in your local area, contact your local newspapers, TV stations, or other media by sending them a letter or fax about the demonstration. Send the fax a day or two before the event and then call by phone on the morning of the event. Your advisory should include important details of your event such as why, when, where, and whom to contact. See the sample media advisory below that could be used for a demonstration when there is good, up-to-date, documentation to back up a connection to puppy mills. Otherwise, the message should be generic and should focus on adoptions, for example “Adopt! Don’t Shop!”

Is there anything else I need to know?

Keep the following in mind as you plan your demonstration. This is a big job and will take a good amount of effort, but ultimately it will be very rewarding!

- Bring a list of talking points to the demonstration, so that, if needed, you can easily refer to them while speaking to media or passersby. Consider including statistics on this list such as:
- 2-4 million—Estimated number of puppies sold annually who originated from puppy mills (USDA licensed and non-USDA licensed).
- 3-4 million—Estimated number of dogs and cats euthanized by shelters every year in the U.S.
- More than 10,000—Estimated number of puppy mills in the U.S.
- Enlist a volunteer to help you welcome your new demonstrators. You and she or he should collect contact information, maintain contact, and show gratitude for their involvement.
- Take lots of photos and also video, if possible.



Sample Media Advisory

Pet Stores Support Puppy Mills: Concerned Consumers to Demonstrate at [insert pet store name here]

Demonstration To Educate Consumers About Cruelties in America’s Puppy Mills

WHO: [Name of group or organizing individuals]

WHAT: [Demonstration in front of [pet store name] to draw attention to the connection between pet stores and inhumane breeding facilities called puppy mills. We are calling on [pet store name] to stop selling puppies and instead work with local shelters and breed rescue groups to promote adoption of animals. Demonstrators will provide information about this issue to passersby. A group of [number] demonstrators is expected.

WHEN: [Date and time]

WHERE: [Cross streets or address and specific location on public property, include city and state]

For more information, contact [name and phone number of organizer].

More information about nationwide efforts to stop puppy mills can be found at humanesociety.org/pupppymills.

If You Suspect A Poorly Run Breeding Facility

If there appears to be cruelty (neglect and/or abuse via unsanitary conditions, cramped cages, sick animals, lack of food/water/shelter, etc.) immediately contact your local animal control or animal shelter. If none of these agencies exists in your area, call your local law enforcement agency (police, sheriff or constable) or health department to report the situation. You have the option of making an anonymous complaint, but here are a few things to consider before doing so: 1) This may make an investigator less likely to visit the facility since he/she may think that if it was serious, you would have left your contact information and/or 2) Potentially hurt the case or prevent them from even obtaining access to the property because judges need proof and/or testimony from witnesses in order to obtain search warrants and/or criminal prosecutions.

Determine whether the facility is licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Care Division. Only commercial facilities (those that sell puppies to other businesses who in turn sell the puppies to the public) are required to be USDA licensed—this is a small portion of all the large-scale breeders in the country. To find this information, visit the USDA website: www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/efoia.

If the facility is not licensed with the USDA because it sells only directly to the public, contact your local animal care and control office or law enforcement officials. They can help you file a complaint or direct you to the correct agency that handles such complaints, if one exists. In some states, it is entirely unclear what agency, if any, has jurisdiction over puppy mill investigations. Be respectful and patient with enforcement agencies as they themselves may be unclear to which agency to refer you.

It is imperative that you have as much information as possible and have it organized before calling any agency. The more you are able to provide, the easier it is for any agency to follow through. Please note you should never enter anyone's property without permission. Be prepared with as many of the following as you can before calling in a complaint:

- Name of "breeder"
- Name of kennel (if any)
- Address
- Phone number
- Your concerns (it often helps to have this written out for reference before calling so you don't forget anything)
- Number of animals present
- Number of breeds present
- Description of the overall conditions
- Advertisements placed by the facility (if any)
- If the complaint came about after an animal was purchased from the facility, any photos or veterinary records documenting the condition of the animal.

Contact The HSUS's Puppy Mills Task Force at 1-877-MILL-TIP if you are unsure of what to do, unable to find an agency with jurisdiction, or if local agencies convey that they cannot help.

Other Ways To Help Stop Puppy Mills

Do not buy a puppy from a pet store, over the Internet or via the newspaper

Inform others that investigations have shown time and again that pet store staff cannot be relied upon to tell the truth about where their store's puppies originate. Pet store owners and managers have been filmed attesting that they have personally visited the breeders from which they purchase their puppies, and that their suppliers are wonderful loving homes, when in fact, they are puppy mills. Many have even been cited for violations of the Animal Welfare Act. Similarly, "family raised" or "farm raised" puppies being sold on the Internet are very often from puppy mills. For more information visit humanesociety.org/pupmills.

Do you know a humane breeder?

If you know a humane breeder, or are one, contact The HSUS. Compassionate, reputable dog breeders play a vital role in the effort to help make puppy mills history. Good breeders are in a unique position to offer perspective and guidance on the proper way to care for dogs used for breeding and their puppies. Good breeders can help set a standard for the industry and help prospective buyers understand how important humane care is for breeding dogs and puppies. Visit us at humanesociety.org/breeder.