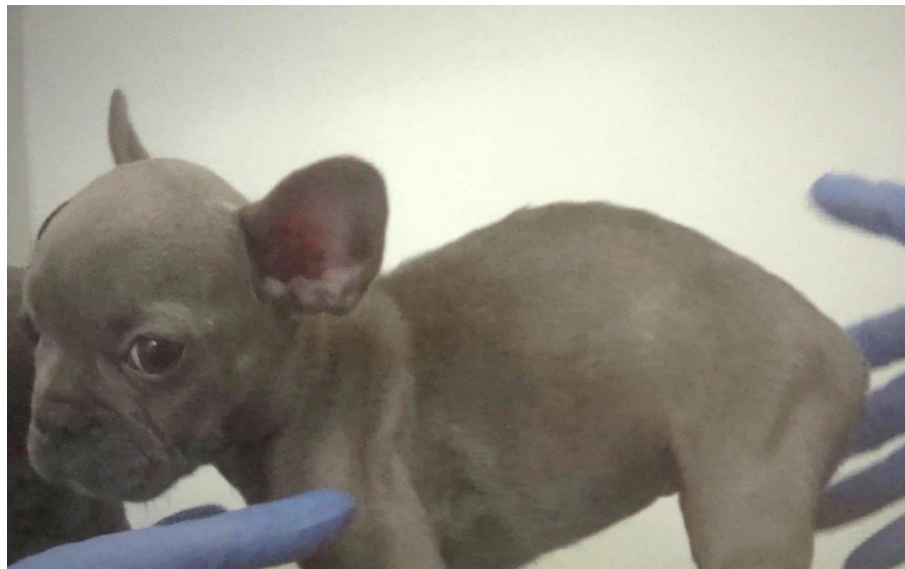


# Undercover investigation of Petland in Frisco, Texas, finds underweight and sick puppies; sick rabbit left to die

## Seventh Petland investigation in less than 12 months by the Humane Society of the United States exposes disturbing pattern of poor treatment

A three-week undercover investigation of the Frisco, Texas Petland store (July 17-August 8, 2019) found underweight puppies, very sick puppies who were force-fed or given ad-hoc remedies for a week or more instead of being



Photos, page 1 and 2: some of the puppies were noticeably underweight and suffered from a lack of appetite, vomiting and diarrhea. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

taken to a veterinarian immediately, ailing puppies who were sent back to their seller rather than receiving prompt care and treatment, and a sick rabbit who was left to die instead of being taken to a veterinarian. Employees also discussed placing dying animals in the freezer, possibly while still alive. Our investigation ended abruptly when the HSUS's investigator became ill and was diagnosed with campylobacter, a zoonotic bacterial illness that a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [investigation](#) linked to contact with sick Petland puppies.

The Frisco Petland store was the seventh Petland store the HSUS has investigated undercover in less than a year. At every store, we found sick puppies in back rooms, and at five of the

stores, including the Frisco, Texas and Tyler, Texas stores, we found dead pets in the stores' freezers<sup>1</sup>.

Sick puppies were documented at the Frisco, Texas Petland store from the first day of the investigation to the last day of the investigation.



Many puppies, transported hundreds of miles to the Frisco Petland store from puppy mills in the Midwest, had bloody diarrhea or were vomiting, coughing, sneezing or lethargic, and several were visibly underweight.

The Petland Frisco store returned several puppies to their breeders – a long and miserable trip for such young animals – when their illnesses or injuries were deemed to be beyond what the store owner was willing to treat, despite Petland’s website’s claim that “every puppy finds a home” at Petland and that animal welfare is its top priority.

Kennel staff, who had no apparent veterinary training, routinely force-fed sick puppies or gave medications directed by the kennel manager or the store’s owner, who was seen on camera directing sick puppies to be given back-room remedies, such as probiotics or cough syrup, rather than having the puppies taken immediately to a veterinarian.

Despite numerous puppies with bloody diarrhea and other illnesses, we saw no evidence that the Petland store was sending fecal samples for testing in order to correctly diagnose sick puppies; instead, our investigator observed that they provided ad-hoc care in house, sometimes for more than a week. If puppies recovered and were sold, the new owners were not always told their puppies had recently been sick.

The investigation also revealed once again that Petland was purchasing from problematic dealers, including Justin Jackson of Clifton, Kansas, who has appeared in multiple HSUS Horrible Hundred reports on problem breeders (most recently in 2017); and Pinnacle Pet, a high volume Missouri distributor cited with a U.S. Department of Agriculture violation in

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<sup>1</sup> Some ex Petland employees have claimed that sick animals were sometimes put in Petland’s freezers to hasten their deaths.

2018 for a sick puppy who hadn't received adequate medical care, and another violation in 2015 when nine puppies died as a result of being left in a hot vehicle<sup>2</sup>.

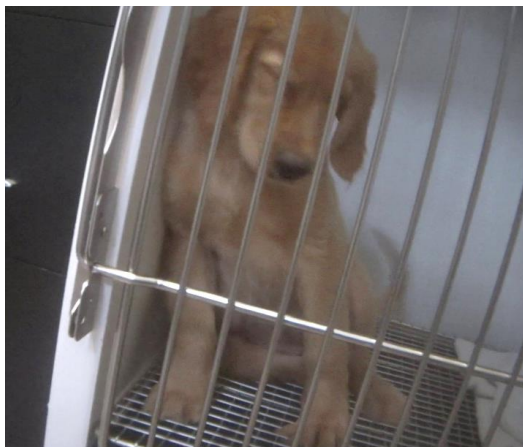
The HSUS investigator working at Frisco Petland began to feel sick after working in the kennel area for more than a week. On August 7, 2019, an urgent care facility informed the investigator they had tested positive for campylobacter, an infectious bacterial disease. The HSUS immediately pulled the investigator out of the store, contacted the Denton County and Collin County Health Departments and the Texas Department of State Health Services and then contacted Frisco Animal Services to report that puppies at the Frisco Petland were not being given proper veterinary care and might be infected with campylobacter.

Following our investigation, Animal Services visited the store, and reportedly documented violations of the city animal ordinance and issued citations<sup>3</sup>.

## Quotes and photographs from the investigator's log

**July 17 (day one of the investigation):** The investigator wrote, *"From the trays that I cleaned, most of the puppies had diarrhea and I did not observe any normal stool."*

Also, on day one, the investigator discovered a female golden retriever puppy who was squinting as if in pain and had a swollen right eye, and a German Shepherd puppy who had a head tilt. It appears these puppies were not treated for these conditions and both were eventually shipped back to their suppliers for a refund instead.



A German Shepherd pup with head tilt and a golden retriever with apparent untreated eye infection were later sent back to their suppliers. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> It appears that Pinnacle/Sobrad may have contested both reports; for unknown reasons, the records of both violations were later removed from the USDA's website.

<sup>3</sup> As the case was still open at the time this report was written, the HSUS was not able to obtain specific documents detailing the nature of the citations, but verified that citations were issued based on verbal discussions with law enforcement.

July 18 (day two of the investigation): The investigator wrote, “I observed the Weimaraner puppy as lethargic and underweight.” [Photo, page 2].

The investigator added:

“I checked on feces throughout the day, but one kennel that stood out had one white French

bulldog and two blue French bulldogs. The puppies had diarrhea 5-7 times during my shift. I bathed the male blue French bulldog after the last bowel movement because he had defecated on himself.”



Top photo: A diarrhea-filled tray from French bulldog puppies. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

Bottom photo: Three sick French bulldog puppies. Credit: HSUS, 2019.



**July 19 (day three of the investigation):**

The HSUS investigator was shown a weak and injured rabbit lying in a box.

Speaking with a cashier who had brought the animal to the back room, the investigator asked

what happens to ailing animals who don't get better, and the cashier said, “Um, they freeze them. So don't look in the freezer [if] you're grossed out by dead things.”

The rabbit was left in the cardboard box, and it appears he was never taken to a veterinarian for diagnosis, treatment or humane euthanasia. Our investigator later documented his dead body in the store's freezer.



Top photo: A rabbit who can't stand or hop or hold his neck up was left in a cardboard box. A worker told the HSUS investigator that there were no plans to take the rabbit to a vet and that when animals don't get better, "They freeze them." She added, "Don't look in the freezer. Dead animals." Credit: HSUS, 2019.



Bottom photo: The investigator later found the rabbit, dead, in a black plastic bag in the pet store's freezer. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

The investigator also noted:

*“[We] picked up two white French bulldog puppies from the kennel area to place in the chamber for nebulizer treatment. The French bulldog with the lop ears had heavy mucus and drainage from the nostrils. The puppy also had heavy, raspy breathing.”*



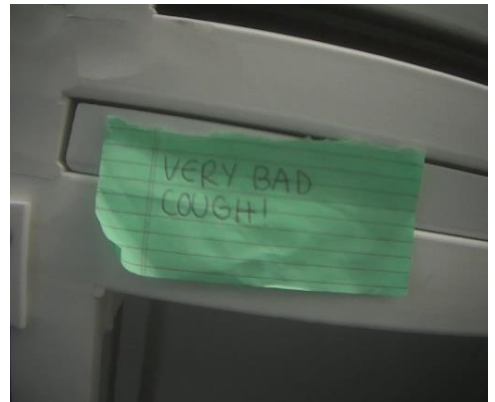
Two sick French bulldogs with upper respiratory infections. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**July 20 (day four of the investigation):** The HSUS investigator found a newly-arrived sick soft coated wheaton terrier who had been left in the isolation cage all night without water and with a note on the cage that read “Very Bad Cough.” The investigator noted, *“When I moved the puppy to a different kennel and gave the puppy water, the puppy started drinking immediately...”*



Right photo:  
“Very Bad  
Cough” note on  
Wheaton  
Terrier’s cage.

Left photo: A  
Wheaton  
Terrier denied  
water since July  
19<sup>th</sup>. Credit:  
HSUS, 2019.



**July 22 (day five of the investigation):** The investigator wrote, “I observed that the Weimaraner puppy was no longer in the store. [My co-worker] stated that the puppy had been sold over the

weekend ... Across from the Chihuahua, [three French bulldogs] were in the top kennel. All three dogs appeared to have some respiratory distress and were coughing/sneezing.”

**July 23 (day six of the investigation):**

The investigator noted that three white French bulldog puppies are still sick but apparently have not been taken to a veterinarian.



**July 24 (day seven of the**

**investigation):** The investigator noted that the sick white French bulldog puppy from the sales floor was put into the cage with the other three sick pups. About another puppy, the investigator wrote: *“While cleaning kennels, I opened a kennel that contained four smaller breed puppies that had arrived yesterday.*



*A white Maltese mix puppy was lateral and lethargic in the kennel. I stood the puppy up, but the puppy fell over. I checked capillary refill time which was at 2+ seconds and the gums were very pale. ... [My coworker] stated that the puppy was ill due to low blood sugar and that it was not necessary to see a veterinarian. ... I observed that there were three Cavalier King Charles Spaniel puppies in a kennel having loose, bloody stool, and one puppy’s left eye was squinting and watery.”*

**July 25 (day eight of the investigation):** The HSUS investigator located the body of the previously-mentioned sick rabbit in the freezer, wrapped in a black bag (photo, page 5).

After checking on the puppies, the investigator wrote: *“The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel puppies were having loose, bloody stool twice today. The smallest Cavalier puppy’s right eye was still watery and appeared to be squinting. I observed that the Maltese mix puppy that was sick yesterday was moved back to the sales floor. The Maltese puppy was still lethargic and had pale gums, with a capillary refill time of approx. 2 seconds. The Yorkie puppies that had not been eating over the last few days were on the sales floor. Throughout the day, the Yorkie puppies were lethargic and not eating.”*

**Photo:** Two sick Yorkie puppies who have not been eating are put on the sales floor. Credit: HSUS, 2019.



**July 26 (day nine of the investigation):** The investigator wrote, *“The golden retriever puppy is still in isolation (Day 10 in isolation) and the eye still appears to be painful... In the isolation room, the two small Yorkie puppies are being housed due to not eating, being underweight, and being lethargic. Based on a WhatsApp message from [the kennel manager], the smaller Yorkie puppy must be force-fed every day... I observed several [sick puppies] taken out by Sales Reps to meet customers on the sale floor, including the Maltese mix puppy that had collapsed, the Shiba Inu puppy that has been sneezing, [the] Siberian husky with bloody stool [and the] Cavalier King Charles puppy with bloody stool seen yesterday.”*





Photo: Day 10 in isolation for a sick golden retriever puppy who has not been treated by a veterinarian. She was returned to the breeder on July 29, 2019, without any known eye treatment. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**July 27 (day ten of the investigation):** The investigator wrote, *“Three puppies were being force-fed every two hours ... [including] the two Yorkie puppies in isolation, the singular puppy housed outside of isolation, and the Pomeranian puppy. The Pomeranian puppy had fallen ill yesterday ... and appeared to be very lethargic [today]. I observed [my coworker] force-feeding the Pomeranian puppy several times today. [Another kennel tech] stated that she had thought that the Pomeranian and the smaller Yorkie puppy would pass away overnight due to their sickness.”*



A sick, lethargic Pomeranian puppy was force-fed because he would not eat. The puppy later disappeared from the store and the HSUS investigator could not determine what had happened to the puppy. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**July 29 (day 11 of the investigation):** The investigator noted: *“The [soft-coated wheaten terrier] was at the back of the store with a wet hacking cough. The puppy had previously been separated due*

to a cough [but] once physical symptoms subsided, [he] was put back on the sales floor. The puppy is now sick [again] with a cough. I also observed that the Yorkie puppy had a cough. The four French bulldog puppies sounded very congested. The smaller Yorkie puppy that [has] been [in] isolation for some time was still not eating very well, [was] lethargic and had pale gums... In the morning, the [sick] tricolor Shiba Inu was housed with the cream Shiba Inu [who was sold later in the day]. Several puppies in different kennels were having very loose stool, including a Siberian husky with mucus and blood in the stool. [Another sales rep] took two dogs out to meet customers that had been sick...one of the dogs, a cream French bulldog, was currently sick. The [puppy] appeared to be congested and was wheezing... I also observed [my coworker] holding the Dogue de Bordeaux by the front legs while walking.”



A worker hauls a Dogue de Bourdeaux puppy by his front legs. Credit: HSUS, 2019.



A sick Siberian husky was one of many puppies who had blood and mucus in his stool. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

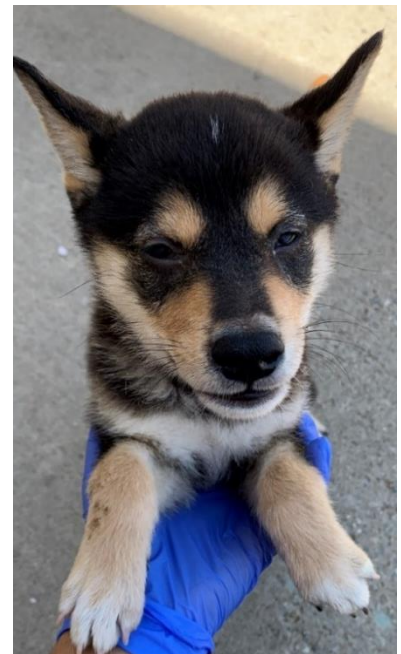


Left: A Yorkie puppy was so sick that his head had to be propped up.  
Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**July 30 (day 12 of the investigation):** On Tuesdays of each week, new puppies arrived at the Frisco, Texas Petland store. When the investigator arrived on this Tuesday morning, 30 new puppies had already arrived, making for a total count of almost 100 puppies in the store. About the puppies already in the store, the HSUS investigator wrote *“The tricolor Shiba Inu puppy [has been] losing weight, was lethargic and not eating. ... The puppy appeared to have a very soft, fluid filled abdomen. [The kennel manager] stated that she had force-fed a lot of water and Pedialyte to the puppy... [who had] both nasal and ocular drainage,*



*loose stool and tacky gums... [but that she] was not taking the puppy to the veterinarian yet... [The sales manager] came into the store at opening and [looked] at the Yorkie puppy that had had a persistent cough. [He] confirmed that the puppy had only a cough and the puppy was sold later in the day.”*



Photos:

Above: A sick Yorkie was sold on July 30, 2019. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

Right: A sick Shiba Inu was having trouble breathing. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**July 31 (day 13 of the investigation):** The investigator wrote:

*“I observed that the Siberian husky was lethargic and had blood/mucus in soft stool. I alerted [my coworker] and moved the puppy in order to clean the kennel properly. ... The Shiba Inu puppy was still very lethargic and I did not see any stool in the kennel. The Shiba Inu puppy still had nasal and ocular drainage.... [My coworker] force-fed water to the Shiba Inu puppy. The sick Siberian husky was sold to a customer later in the day... I overheard a conversation between [the sales manager and two sales reps] about a customer that had bought a dog who had gotten sick. [The sales manager said] the customer threatened to go to the paper.”*

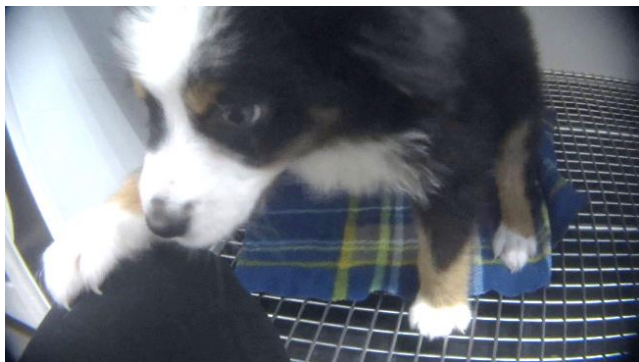


This sick Siberian husky was sold to a customer on July 31, 2019. Credit: HSUS, 2019.



The sick Shiba Inu was still being force-fed and force-hydrated but had not seen a vet. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**August 1 (day 14 of the investigation):** The investigator wrote, “Upon my arrival, I checked on the sick, tricolor Shiba Inu puppy who had redness in his eyes, was lethargic, not eating [and was] underweight.... I also observed that the small Yorkie puppy had still not eaten. [My coworker] stated that the puppy had not eaten [for] approximately 5 days and they had been force-feeding the puppy.... Later in the day, a customer was interested in meeting the mini-Australian Shepherd that had been in isolation for a cough. [A kennel technician told the sale rep that] the puppy had 3 days of medication left. [The sales rep] took the mini Australian Shepherd out to the sales floor to meet the customer and sold the puppy.”



A sick Mini-Australian shepherd with a bad cough who is not on the sales floor is taken from the cage and sold. Credit: HSUS, 2019.



A sick Yorkie who has not eaten for five days is force-fed a gruel by syringe. After just one syringe he turns to hide in the corner of his cage. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**August 2 (day 15 of the investigation):** The investigator noted that the small Yorkshire Terrier was still very sick and had not been thoroughly examined by a veterinarian. According to a kennel tech, a veterinarian had been to the store and had given the Yorkie a shot, but the kennel tech told the HSUS investigator that the puppy needed more care than was given. “Later in the day, [my coworker] stated that she needed to force-feed the small Yorkie puppy again. .... [She] continued to force feed [the puppy] a mash of kibble, water, and chicken breasts [and] then stopped and stated that the heart rate for the puppy was very fast. I felt the heart rate for the puppy, which was very fast, and I was unable to get an accurate count. The puppy was shivering and appeared to be very skinny (I could feel all the ribs; approximately 3 out of 9 body score).... I observed that some new dogs were coughing like the

Shetland Sheepdog, a brown/white shih tzu, a brown shih tzu, one of the black/white akitas, and a goldendoodle (on the sales floor). ... The tricolor Shiba Inu puppy was still in isolation and appeared to be lethargic throughout the day. The puppy still had nasal drainage and did not eat.”



Photo: This sickly Yorkie was shivering and had a rapid heartbeat while being force-fed. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**August 3 (day 16 of the investigation):** The HSUS investigator observed a common sight in the Frisco Petland kennels – abnormal stools from new puppies and those who had been there for days. To the best of our knowledge, during our investigation, Petland never once took fecal samples to have them tested at a veterinarian’s office for an accurate diagnosis. Kennel staff were simply instructed to give Drontal Plus, a dewormer, and Pro-Pectalin, a probiotic, to the pups.

*“I started to clean the kennels and observed that the small, brown shih tzu was lying in a corner of the kennel. I observed that [the] gums were very pale, and I let [other staff] know. ... Later in the day, I observed the shih tzu to be very lethargic. When I removed the puppy from the kennel, I observed very dark feces stuck in the fur on the hind end. The feces appeared to be very green. The [owner of the store] stated that I should force-feed some water and give probiotics. [A kennel tech] also gave Drontal-Plus and Pro-Pectalin. ... A [sales rep] sold a Pomeranian today. Once the Pomeranian was placed in a kennel, I observed soft, bloody stool. [A kennel tech] gave the puppy Drontal-Plus and Pro-Pectalin. The puppy was also scooting on the hind*



*end. [The sales rep] stated that unless the puppy was currently on medication, the buyer does not need to know that the puppy was having loose, bloody stool.”*

Photo: The kennel manager lifts up a sick Pomeranian puppy who has just been sold to make sure he does not have diarrhea on his fur. The puppy had soft, bloody stool but was sold anyway. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

Photo: The HSUS investigator found a brown shih tzu puppy lying in his cage and covered in greenish feces. He is being force-fed Drontal-Plus and Pro-pectalin – which the investigator says was given to all sick puppies regardless, without any testing. Credit: HSUS, 2019.



**August 5 (day 17 of the investigation):** The investigator wrote: *“I immediately noticed that the small shih tzu puppy [appeared] to be lethargic and underweight. I later observed the puppy straining to defecate for some time and then observed blood in the stool. A short while later, I observed blood droplets in the tray under the shih tzu puppy and nasal drainage and drool with blood in it. ... I observed that the tricolor Shiba Inu puppy appeared to be more lethargic than my last shift at the store. The puppy was very low energy, had red-tinged*

*eyes, dry nose, dried drainage on the nose, eye drainage and was very underweight. ... I observed that the cream Shiba Inu puppy that had been sold last week now had a hacking cough. A note on his kennel stated that the owner would be picking the puppy up tomorrow, 8/6. I advised [the kennel tech] that the puppy was coughing. [She] stated that the new owner will take the puppy to the doctor tomorrow, that Petland pays for [it]. [She] stated that we did not have to tell the new owners of the cough because the doctor will know that the puppy has a cough. [The kennel tech also] mentioned that the owner may not want the puppy anymore.”*

Photo: A sick shih tzu with blood and mucus discharge. Credit: HSUS, 2019.



**August 6 (day 18 of the investigation):** The HSUS investigator brought two puppies out to a transport van on orders of the Petland store owner. One was a very sick Yorkie who was kissed goodbye by the investigator’s coworker, who was on the verge of tears. About the other puppy put in the van the investigator wrote: *“[The store owner] stated that he would be taking a blue/white, French bulldog back to the breeder and would get credit with the breeder. [The store owner] stated that the French bulldog had a grade 2 heart murmur. ... The isolation room*

contained two blue, female, French bulldogs (ID #'s: 23669 and 23671), a black/white, male akita (ID #23500) for congestion, and the tricolor, male, Shiba Inu (ID #23582). The two French bulldogs were placed in the nebulizer today for congestion. The French bulldog (#23669) had excessive nasal drainage and was very underweight. [A kennel tech] later put the male akita (#23500) into the nebulizer for treatment. I did not observe any treatments to the tricolor, Shiba Inu (#23582), but the puppy appeared to be underweight, lethargic, red eyes, and had nasal drainage. The Shiba Inu was noted to have some stomach pain on 7/25/19, then moved to isolation on 7/29/19. Today was day 9 in isolation.”



A sick French bulldog was given human cough syrup. The same sick Frenchie was also visibly underweight. Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**August 7 (day 19 of the investigation):** A representative from Petland Corporate showed up at the Frisco, Texas store. The investigator was told by the lead kennel tech to make sure to use hand sanitizer on her gloves between cleaning each individual kennel – a practice that was not in place prior to the corporate representative’s visit. There were many sick puppies during the visit by the



Petland Corporate representative. The HSUS investigator wrote, “The [corporate representative] later stated that she would like the Rottweiler puppy to be moved off the sales floor because he was underweight. ... I also observed [a sales rep] take one of the four white French bulldogs out to the sales floor to meet a customer. [This bulldog had previously been sick].”

Photo: The Petland Corporate representative requested the store remove an underweight Rottweiler puppy from the sales floor. Credit: HSUS, 2019.





Photo:  
A previously sick French bulldog, not yet on the sales floor, is taken out to meet a potential buyer.  
Credit: HSUS, 2019.

**August 8 (Last day of the investigation):**  
The HSUS investigator, who had been experiencing health problems for more than a week, was notified by their

local urgent care center that they tested positive for campylobacter bacteria. The investigator notified the store owner and managers about their illness before leaving to pick up their medications. When the investigator expressed concern for the health of the puppies and the other workers in the store, the store owner said he would contact Petland's corporate office to determine next steps. It was the investigator's last day of employment at the store.