



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

PUPPY MILL CLOSURE: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON A LOCAL COMMUNITY

When a substandard breeding facility, a.k.a. puppy mill, is closed and large numbers of dogs removed, this humane action can drain the financial resources of a local community, local animal welfare entities, and large humane organizations. A small town rarely derives any benefit from a puppy mill's existence. Substandard large breeding facilities employ few staff, often don't pay required taxes or license fees, and generate much animal waste – as well as causing unpleasant odors, pollutants and noise. Once a major puppy mill enterprise is discovered, it can be ignored or dealt with. But some communities don't have the necessary resources to handle the situation. Prevention is key, as a community should discourage large scale breeding facilities from locating in their area.

One law enforcement official was brutally honest. He told an HSUS cruelty investigator, “If an event involving more than 100 dogs occurs, we will just ignore it because we simply don't have the resources to handle the problem.” But ignoring a problem does not make it go away; it just perpetuates the suffering and allows additional breeding facilities to be created. A puppy mill with 100 dogs, if unchecked and unmonitored, often continues to grow until it houses 300, 500 or in some cases even more than 1,000 dogs, and its effects on the community can no longer be ignored.

Properly monitoring large-scale dog breeding facilities, including working with breeders to correct any problems with animal husbandry practices before substandard conditions become out of control, can prevent the need for large-scale seizures and huge financial costs to the humane societies, police and municipal governments that must rescue the dogs from squalid conditions.

Community Impact Examples

Carrabus County, NC Puppy Mill, September 2016

When 141 dogs were removed from a puppy mill in North Carolina in September 2016, the Humane Society of the United States deployed its animal rescue team to assist. The costs to The HSUS alone were **more than \$83,400, averaging more than \$591 per dog removed. These costs included \$30,167 for veterinary services,** as well as the cost of sending staff to the site to assist with handling and caring for the animals, and the cost of sheltering and housing both the staff and animals. Had the HSUS not stepped in to assist, local agencies, municipal shelters and smaller nonprofits would have had to cover most of the costs.

Elkins, Arkansas Puppy Mill, March 2016

When 295 dogs were removed from a puppy mill in Madison County, AR on March 3, 2016, the costs to The HSUS alone were more than **\$91,600, or more than \$310 per animal.** These costs included sending staff to the site to assist with handling and caring for the animals, veterinary care, and food, shelter and housing for both staff and animals. It is not always possible for national nonprofits to assist in such cases, leaving local agencies and municipal shelters to foot the bill.

North Dakota Puppy Mill, July 2013

When 170 dogs were rescued from a puppy mill near Fargo, ND on July 10, 2013, the bill for their veterinary care and boarding alone exceeded \$114,900, as disclosed by Sgt Tara Morris of the Cass County Sherriff's Office to local news media. That amounted to about \$675 for each dog's medical care, not including the costs of the rescue itself, the costs of deploying law enforcement equipment and personnel, or expenses related to the judicial proceedings. The Casselton Veterinary Clinic reportedly took a large percentage off the retail bill, resulting in much lower costs to the agency, and the remainder was paid by public donations due to the widespread local media coverage that followed the rescue. However, had the media outreach not been so successful, local agencies would have had to foot the bill.

Montana Puppy Mill, October 2011

In October 2011, The HSUS assisted local authorities in the rescue of 161 Malamutes from a Montana AKC breeder due to animal cruelty. Due to the number of pregnant females seized, the number of animals needing care quickly exceeded 200. The jury trial was lengthy and the owner was not convicted of the 91 cruelty charges until October 2012. During the year-long trial, a local animal care agency cared for the 200 dogs and The HSUS reimbursed for the dogs' expenses. The HSUS's initial outlay for equipment and deployment costs was about \$81,000, but after reimbursing the local animal care agencies for the care and feeding of the dogs during the judicial process, The HSUS's expenses totaled almost \$500,000. Had The HSUS not been able to assist, these costs would have been shouldered by the local agencies.

Vermont Puppy Mill, July 2011

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) recently facilitated the removal , emergency sheltering, and initial veterinary care for 58 Labradors removed from a puppy mill in Vermont after the operator was charged with animal cruelty. The cost to the HSUS of deploying the Rescue Team, purchasing animal care supplies, transporting animals, travel and equipment to assist in the removal and initial treatment of the animals was \$52,675, or almost \$1,000 per animal rescued. This cost did not include the salaries of law enforcement and security staff deployed to the scene, the cost of the legal proceedings, or the first 30 days of supervised, climate-controlled shelter, which was donated by a local horse farm and partially staffed by unpaid volunteers. The value of sheltering the animals at \$10 per animal per day would have added an additional \$17,400 to the costs, for a total of \$70,075, or more than \$1,200 per animal rescued. Extensive follow-up medical expenses for some of the animals, including some who required amputations and tumor removals, are not included in this estimate.

Washington State Puppy Mill, June 2009

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) facilitated the removal, emergency sheltering, and initial veterinary care for 371 dogs from a puppy mill in Washington state after the owner was charged with animal cruelty due to harboring sick animals in dilapidated housing. Private citizens reportedly donated approximately \$12,000 to the local sheriff's department to help care for the dogs. However, law enforcement authorities reported that the estimated cost of the operation was approximately \$330,000, which included the direct costs of the value of services from local veterinarians and clinics for the first 30 days of animal care. Most of the services, however, were provided to the county at no charge by the Humane Society of the United States.

Responding Shelters and Rescue Groups Incur Expenses Long After the Removal

In addition to the costs to local taxpayers, courts and municipalities, nonprofit rescue organizations often incur high costs when assisting in puppy mill rescues. For example:

- When 69 dogs were seized from an Elmwood, WI puppy mill in July 2016, the Pierce County court estimated that the cost of caring for the dogs during the legal proceedings totaled approximately

\$90,000. The court estimated that it would cost an additional \$20 per dog, per day, for every animal until each dog was released for adoption or euthanized.

- When the Central Nebraska Humane Society took in 31 dogs from a puppy mill closure in January 2016, they estimated they would have to spend \$200 to \$250 per dog to get each animal medically ready for adoption, in addition to feeding and sheltering them. Their adoption fee for each dog was \$120, leaving about half of the shelter's expenses uncovered.
- A spokesperson for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office reported in September 2015 that it would cost various shelters approximately \$100,000 to temporarily house 183 animals removed from an Alabama puppy mill.
- In January 2011, a Houston-area shelter spent more than \$79,000 to treat, house and care for 241 dogs rescued from a hoarding and breeding facility. This included medical care such as vaccinations and worming and post natal care, veterinary boarding, and transportation. (Expenses were reimbursed by The HSUS.)

Other Costs of Closing Down a Facility

The costs of closing down a puppy mill are diverse and include more than just the removal and treatment of the animals. Extensive staff time, including law enforcement staff time, is needed to investigate a facility and document the problems. Dealing with 300, 500 or even over 1,000 dogs is a massive and expensive undertaking. Specially equipped trucks, hundreds of cages, food, water, medical supplies, cleaning supplies, bowls, haz-mat gear, waste disposal essentials and other supplies must be brought to the site. Professional dog handlers, veterinarians and veterinary technicians are required as well as animal experts assisted by numerous volunteers.

A separate facility, (i.e., warehouse or fairgrounds) is usually needed to place the animals once they are removed from the breeding facility – costs for utilities, rent, and insurance are incurred. Animals are usually transported from the area on trucks thus incurring high fuel and equipment bills. No single local animal shelter will be able to meet the immediate needs of such a large number of animals. In addition, food and lodging may be needed for the many essential volunteers and experts on site.

When dogs and puppies are removed, each animal is potential evidence and has to be carefully documented, photographed, and examined for medical problems. In addition to sheltering, each animal is soon give necessary vaccinations, grooming and flea/tick medication, and in some cases is placed with a shelter or foster family. If the animals are made available for adoption, then the intake shelter will incur the expense of transporting the dogs hundreds of miles (staff, vehicle use, fuel costs) as well as of caring for the dogs and will ensure they are spayed or neutered before finally being adopted to a new home.

When there is a possibility of criminal charges being brought, the expenses increase substantially as even more time and documentation is required. Yet if criminal charges are not brought, chances are high the breeders will immediately go back into business with similar results. If an owner chooses not to relinquish ownership of the animals and if no bonding provisions exists, the local community can be forced to house and care for the animals for months or more than a year pending court action. The costs associated with such a large undertaking can be staggering and be larger than the entire local government budget.

Why So Expensive?

Taking care of a large number of dogs is always a financial commitment, but these figures are staggering. Why does it cost so much to close down a substandard breeding facility?

Transportation: First, the animals are living in horrible conditions and must be moved immediately and given extensive medical care. The humane transportation to a temporary shelter and then to shelters throughout the country of so many animals involves very large trucks specially equipped with proper heating, cooling, and venting as well as sturdy and appropriate cages. Fuel is costly.

Medical Care: Veterinarians, vet techs, examination rooms and equipment, drugs and medical supplies are expensive – even when many services and supplies are donated. If the animals are released and must be placed out of state, each animal must travel with proof of rabies vaccination and an individual health certificate signed by a licensed vet.

Manpower: Because the animals are so stressed by this process (many have never left their cages before nor been exposed to more than 2-3 people), expert animal handlers must be present.

A sufficient number of trained volunteers must be housed in local hotels and provided with food and drink.

For puppy mills with more than 100 dogs, at least 50 people per day may be required (veterinarians, expert animal handlers, vet techs, disaster specialists, and volunteers) to handle the animals and all the associated work.

Manpower needs include: Security, crime scene documentation; animal transfer and transport; photography and transcription for evidence purposes; veterinarians and vet techs to examine each animal and document criminal violations; daily care, feeding, cage cleaning several times per day; supplies acquisition and management; groomers and groomer assistants; staff for loading and driving trucks.

Some cases may also involve health department personnel (due to the extreme unsanitary conditions found at most puppy mills), mental health and child protective agencies.

Supplies: Necessary supplies include: trucks, fuel, vehicle insurance, cages, leashes, toys, cage liner pads, bowls, food, water, electricity, water supply, office supplies for keeping records on and near each animal; animal handling gear; protective clothing; communications equipment; film and cameras; grooming supplies; provisions for staff such as meals and first aid supplies, sanitation equipment, and human and animal medications.

Building: One large building is usually required to house the animals pending the legal hearing and custody decision, and as a staging area to physically examine, properly and legally document, and prepare the animals for transfer to appropriate shelters and approved rescue groups throughout the country. Sufficient ventilation, heating or cooling, health and environmental considerations, proper zoning considerations, office area and computer capabilities, electricity, parking, and bathroom facilities for humans are required.