

Puppy mills and pet stores

Most Americans have pets.

About 50% of people in the United States own a dog and about 34% own a cat. Yet only about 30% of pets in homes come from shelters and rescues. Three million adoptable dogs and cats are euthanized in shelters every year.¹

Pet store puppies come from puppy mills.

Responsible breeders do not sell their puppies to pet stores because they want to meet their puppy buyers in person—and a majority of national breed clubs' codes of ethics prohibit or discourage their members from selling their dogs to pet stores. The suppliers of pet store puppies are largely puppy mills, commercial facilities that mass-produce puppies for sale without adequate attention to their physical, behavioral, or psychological needs. The Humane Society of the United States has conducted several hidden-camera investigations² showing that many of the breeding facilities that supply pet stores are mills.

Puppies sold in pet stores come from all over the country—and many come from breeders with one or more Animal Welfare Act violations.

Some breeders found selling to pet stores have a record of repeat violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act. USDA inspection reports reveal breeders with sick and injured dogs who had not been treated by a vet; underweight dogs with their ribs, hips and spines protruding; puppies with their feet falling through wire floors; puppies with severe deformities or missing limbs; dogs standing in piles of feces; and food contaminated by mold and insects.

Pet stores often do not disclose the origin of the puppies they sell.

Most pet stores do not disclose the true origins of their puppies, instead using deceptive sales pitches about “USDA-licensed” or “professional” breeders. Unfortunately, the federal Animal Welfare Act prescribes survival standards for dogs, not humane care standards. The USDA has repeatedly asserted that their regulations and standards are *minimum* requirements.³ Indeed, the agency's own Animal Welfare Act Fact Sheet⁴ states “*Although Federal requirements establish basic standards, regulated businesses are encouraged to exceed the specified minimum standards.*”

The pipeline of puppy sales to pet stores exposes puppies to stress and disease

As they are shipped to pet stores, very young puppies typically spend days in cramped cages on a truck, exposed to puppies from a variety of other sources, some of whom may be sick. During this time, their immune systems are not fully developed and they can be exposed to a range of diseases. In addition, puppies have died from overheating on unattended transport vehicles and other dangerous incidents on the road.

¹ Pet Industry Market Size and Ownership Statistics,

https://www.americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp (accessed January 13, 2020).

² Read about our pet store investigations <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/investigations-reports>

³ See 7 U.S.C. § 2143(A)(8), stating that the federal Animal Welfare Act does not preempt state laws.

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service, “Fact Sheet: Animal Care. The Animal Welfare Act,” in https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_welfare/2012/animal_welfare_act_english.pdf (accessed January 13, 2020).



Puppies sold at pet stores often have serious health or psychological problems.

Some of the illnesses common to pet store puppies include zoonotic diseases, which can be spread to other pets and humans. Buyers are often faced with enormous vet bills or even the death of the puppy within days or weeks of purchase. A puppy may seem healthy for months only to develop symptoms of serious congenital conditions much later. These health problems are often the result of unsanitary conditions, insufficient veterinary care and poor breeding at puppy mills.

Pet stores do not have to sell puppies to be successful.

More than 3,000 pet stores nationwide have signed an HSUS pledge not to sell puppies,⁵ demonstrating that it is possible to have a successful pet-related business without supporting puppy mills.



PHOTO BY THE HSUS

The HSUS recommends never purchasing a puppy from a pet store due to the health, safety and animal welfare concerns described above. People who want to add a puppy to their family are urged to visit a reputable shelter or rescue organization, or purchase only from a small, responsible breeder who will show the buyer the parent of the puppy and allow them to see where the puppy was born and raised. For more information on buying a puppy, see [humanesociety.org/puppy](https://www.humanesociety.org/puppy).

Find out more information at [humanesociety.org/puppymills](https://www.humanesociety.org/puppymills).



⁵ Learn more about Puppy Friendly Pet Stores at [humanesociety.org/puppystores](https://www.humanesociety.org/puppystores).