

Dear members of the Environment Committee,

I'd just like you to meet a few of the Pet Shop puppies I've treated in the last few years

Cubby was a 2 month old Schipperke who was purchased from the pet store with a cough. We started him on antibiotics and within less than a week he had full blown pneumonia. He was hospitalized and despite heroic treatment, died. His owners incurred thousands of dollars in veterinary bills trying to save him.

Duncan was luckier than Cubby. He arrived in his new home with pneumonia but with aggressive hospitalization and treatment he recovered after a few months. Very aggressive antibiotics that should not normally be used in a puppy had to be used to combat the infection, These antibiotics have the potential to cause joint damage in growing puppies, but without them he would have died. His owners spent over \$5000 to save him. His infection recurred about 6 months later but this time he responded without hospitalization. We are concerned that his lungs may never be completely normal. No pet owner should have to go through this after bringing home a new puppy.

Fred was an adorable French Bulldog who developed a respiratory infection a couple of months after being purchased. He too developed pneumonia and with aggressive hospitalization recovered. He had to be treated with not one, but 2 very strong antibiotics because the infection was so aggressive. One of the antibiotics is contraindicated in young puppies because it can cause cartilage damage in their growing joints, but it was the only antibiotic that would save his life. After finally recovering from the pneumonia, he developed a fatal lung lobe torsion and was euthanized due to the grave prognosis. Like Cubby's owners, Fred's owners incurred thousands of dollars in veterinary bills before losing him.

Meet PeeWee, a dachshund that also was purchased from the pet store with a cough. It persisted despite treating with several rounds of several different antibiotics that would normally treat a puppy respiratory infection. We had to sedate her to obtain samples from her lungs only to find out, she too had a very aggressive infection which would require several months of very strong antibiotics. These same antibiotics have the potential to cause joint damage in young growing puppies, but it was the only antibiotic choice we had. We later found out that the puppy had actually been treated with this same antibiotic prior to purchase, yet the owner was never notified that an antibiotic contraindicated in puppies had been given to her puppy. She was never notified of the possibility of joint damage from the medication administered by the pet store. After months of treatment, we could still not get the infection completely under control. She was finally tested for an immune disorder known to be inherited in Dachshunds. She was found to be positive. This means she had a birth defect which gave her a defective immune system. It took almost a year of antibiotics to clear the infection because of this. Because of her infection and her birth defect, her spay procedure had to be postponed until adulthood when she was strong enough to withstand the surgery. The delay has increased her chances of developing breast cancer 200 times.

Fred was an adorable French Bulldog who developed repeated respiratory infections after being purchased from the pet store. He too developed pneumonia and with aggressive hospitalization recovered. He too was treated with the same strong antibiotics as Duncan. After finally recovering from the pneumonia, he developed a fatal lung lobe torsion and was euthanized due to the grave prognosis. Like Cubby's owners, Fred's owners incurred thousands of dollars in veterinary bills before losing him.

Ginger just came from the pet store. She has a parasite called Strongyloides. This parasite is zoonotic, which means people can get it from the puppy. Most puppy parasites that are zoonotic require a person to ingest the worm eggs to become infected which is a very rare occurrence. This parasite, however, can be absorbed through the skin of humans. It can cause blindness, lung and heart disease and death. The poor new owners of this puppy must wear gloves when touching her or remember to wash their hands

thoroughly after touching her. She is still being housetrained and like any puppy has accidents in the house. She has to be confined in a small area so that the parasite does not contaminate the owner's house. The parasite can take months to be decontaminated from the home, so these owners must wear shoes in the house at all times so they don't risk the parasite entering the skin of their feet. It can take over 6 months to rid a puppy of this parasite. So these poor owners have taken this delightful, sweet puppy home and they can't cuddle with it, or let it sleep in their bed and they have to be fearful of their children contracting a dangerous disease if they pet it or walk on the floor where she is currently confined.

Cece is an adorable Cocker Spaniel who was adopted from the Pet Store with Scabies! Another zoonotic disease. Fortunately, the owners did not contract Scabies from Cece, but their other 2 dogs did! After a couple months of treatment all the pets recovered. The treatment required weekly baths with Lime Sulfur dip, which as you can imagine smells just like rotten eggs. These poor new owners had to minimize contact with their new beloved pet and have a house smelling like rotten eggs for 2 months!

I am a veterinarian in Norwalk and have been taking care of new puppies adopted or purchased by families for almost 20 years. I have seen so many sick or dead puppies obtained from pet stores. A story like those above is so common with pet shop/puppy mill puppies. I can't remember a similar case in a dog adopted directly from a reputable breeder.

The owners of many of these puppies incurred thousands of dollars in veterinary expenses. The pet stores give them the option of returning the puppy, but who can return a new member of their family? There needs to be some repercussions from selling a sick or defective puppy. If pet stores have to incur some costs, they will be much more careful about where their puppies come from.

I can't urge you strongly enough to endorse House Bills 5493 and 5804. It is a travesty that here in Connecticut we allow helpless defenseless puppies to go through what they have to go through to come here from the puppy mills and it is a travesty what these new pet owners are put through. Buying a new puppy should be a joyful experience, not a tragedy!

Thank you for your consideration,

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Puppy mills a national disgrace

BY KEN BERNHARD

The mass breeding of puppies that are ultimately sold in pet stores generates outrage among pet owners, animal lovers and many concerned citizens, but the general public and most lawmakers have not sufficiently reacted to the issue. Videos on television and the Internet, as well as many newspaper ac-

counts, have exposed the puppy mill industry, which involves the mass breeding of dogs in stacked, cramped wire cages, without proper shelter or care surrounded by piles of animal waste and filth. It is unquestionably animal cruelty but it has survived because the applicable laws are weak and ineffective.

Puppy mill operators run their businesses in hidden quarters with as little publicity as possible, but it is a million dollar (plus) industry. Somewhere between 2 to 4 million puppies are produced by more than 10,000 commercial breeders, many of which, if not most, are puppy mills. In Missouri alone there are more than 1,000 licensed commercial kennels, a few of which have more than 1,000 breeding dogs. The breeders have little or no incentive to provide proper care for the breeding dogs; their only interest is with the inventory of cute, saleable puppies. The breeding females spend their entire lives in substandard conditions with no human contact. These adult dogs suffer terribly from psychological problems resulting from years of neglect, abuse, and confinement. When these operators are exposed and cited for mistreating their dogs, they simply pay small fines, pro-

vide nominal care, or shut down one operation and begin another one. One operator in Pennsylvania, when recently told that he must provide veterinary care for the 80 dogs hidden in his barn that were found with fleas, open sores, and rotting teeth, decided to shoot them instead. There may not be much we can do in Connecticut to prohibit what is tolerated in other states, apart from not providing a market for the purveyors of this cruelty, but our legislators should take a look at strengthening laws on kennels and animal sales in our state. Nothing in state law covers what happens in an out of state puppy mill before an animal arrives in Connecticut. That is left up to the state of origin and to federal agriculture officials. While an animal sold in Connecticut may have no outward signs of disease, that is no proof that the animal has been bred, fed and handled in a humane manner and almost assuredly, the breeding dogs have been mishandled and abused.

A local group I represent called the Westport Coalition against Puppy Mills is especially active in raising awareness about pets coming from out-of-state puppy mills. More information is available at its website, www.stopuppymills.org, www.animalaw.info.

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