

**Testimony of Karen Rasmussen
Member, Westport Coalition Against Puppy Mills (WCAPM), CT Votes for Animals**

In Opposition to House Bill 5118 – an Act Concerning Certificates of Origin for Dogs Sold by Pet Shop Licensees

**Joint Environment Committee
February 22, 2010**

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and fellow Environment Committee members, thank you for this opportunity to express my concerns regarding House Bill 5118.

For more than 3 years, I have made quarterly visits to the Department of Agriculture to review copies of transport health certificates. These certificates are filed so the State can track the importation of dogs and cats from other states. I believe this tracking is used mostly to confirm that animals beyond a required age have been vaccinated against rabies.

These certificates assist my research into the sources of puppies being sold in our state. WCAPM is then able to educate the general public about breeders (mostly from the Midwest), many of whom run large scale breeding operations commonly known as puppy mills. This is a fact the pet stores would rather not be known. So little information is given to potential customers, or they are out-and-out lied to, making it impossible for them to make a wise buying decision based upon the history of a puppy's breeder. There are large information gaps on these certificates however. A shipment of puppies from a broker (middle man) need not list the breeders' information at all on the certificate.

The new puppy law signed by Governor Rell on 7/8/09 – and effective as of 7/1/09 – was an effort toward more transparency for the consumer. At a glance in the store, a consumer would know the exact name and full address of a puppy's breeder. They would also know if the puppy was shipped via puppy broker, and the broker's full address as well. Additionally, this information was to be filed within 2 days of a puppy's sale with the Department of Agriculture.

In the past week, a group of volunteers visited 16 of the approximately 26 licensed pet stores in our state that sell puppies. The goal was to check for compliance of the new law. I have attached a synopsis of their findings, but the bottom line is that NONE – not one of the 16 pet stores visited – was in full compliance. The omissions were many – missing breeder names, addresses, broker information when applicable – and any information provided was not posted conspicuously within 10 feet of where the puppy was being sold as is required.

If we are unable to locate this information at the stores currently, it would not bode well to rely on the stores to keep such information on file for one year, and remove their obligation to file these certificates at the Department of Agriculture. It is unclear why the DoA wants to amend this law.

I calculated that over ten million dollars in fines to these stores have gone uncollected as of 7/1/09, based upon the \$100 per day, per violation (puppy) structure set up in the new law. Fining pet stores for breaking the law would certainly offset the possible extra time needed by a state employee to file these Certificates of Origin?

It is absolutely necessary that these stores be brought into compliance with the law for the sake of the consumer, and even more so, that these Certificates of Origin be filed by the stores at the Department of Agriculture, not be left for the stores to hide away in a back room.

Thank you.

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Lack of Pet Store Compliance with Puppy Mill Law and Dept. of Agriculture Pet Shop Regulations (Stores Visited February 2010)

Home Raised Pups – Berlin

Per volunteer visit, there were two 4x4 cages visible with 12-15 puppies crammed into each, with no documentation at all within 10 feet of the puppies. This store visit was extremely disturbing, as the puppies were fighting with one another due to overcrowding, and were visibly ill according to the volunteer.



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Email from Westport Coalition volunteer who visited "Home Raised Pups" in Berlin, CT:

15 puppies >25 lbs

Approx. 4x4 kennel

Labs were consistently attacking the Corso puppies who are the smallest in the kennel

ALL puppies were getting frustrated with the other puppies for stepping on them, as there is NO ROOM for any of them to move, therefore there was constant growling/fighting

Boxer with the "odd" face has severe kennel cough if not pneumonia

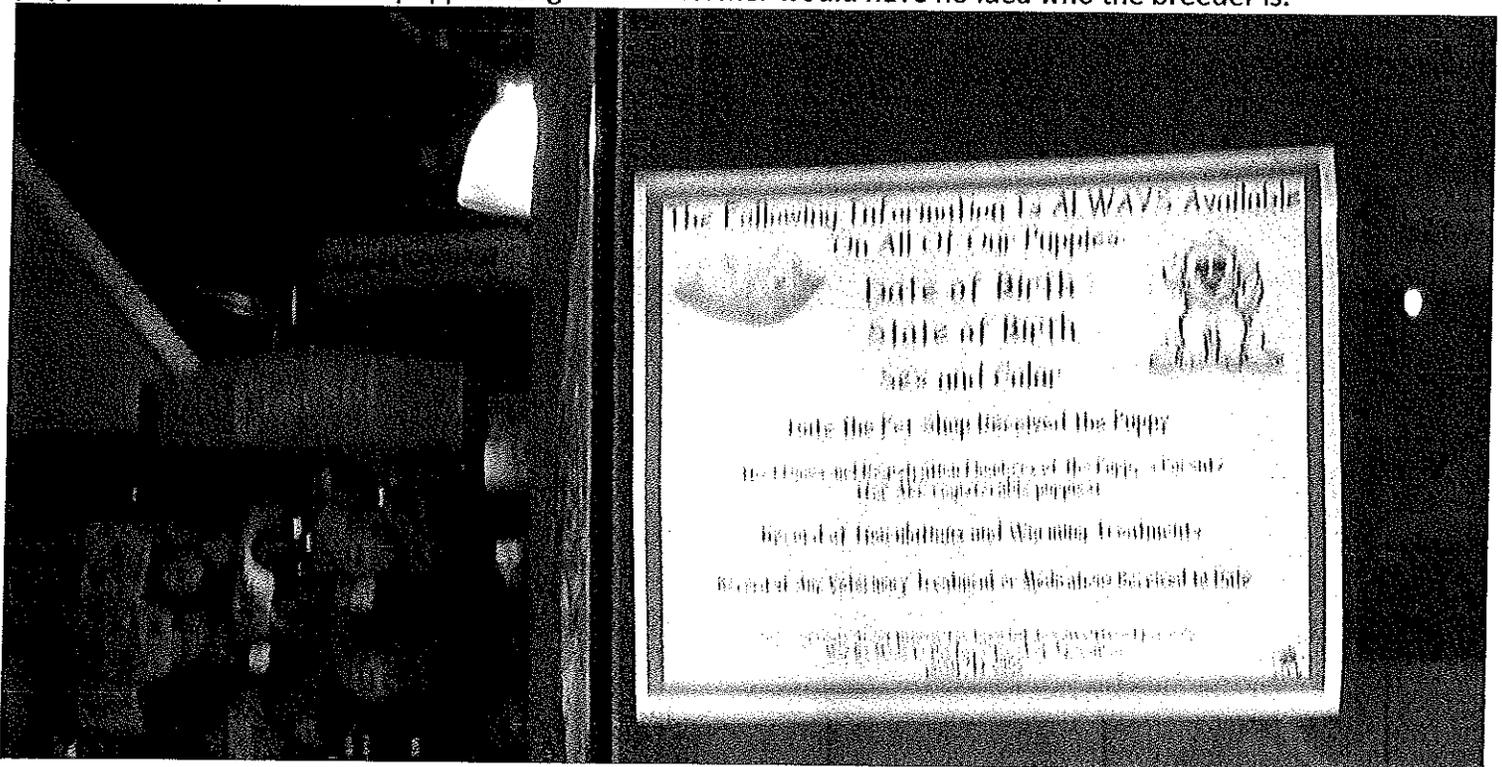
ALL puppies have bad kennel cough, but that one Boxer has it the worst

13 smaller puppies in kennel directly to the side of this kennel, there is another room with dogs (not seen) and the basement has dogs as well, but not seen

Yard area/sheds/garages should be checked as well

All Pets Club – Branford

Per volunteer visit, store not in full compliance of current law. Missing breeder names, full addresses, and broker information if applicable. The only information pertinent to breeders posted within 10 feet of puppies was city and state of puppies' origins. A customer would have no idea who the breeder is.



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All Pets Club – Branford (cont')



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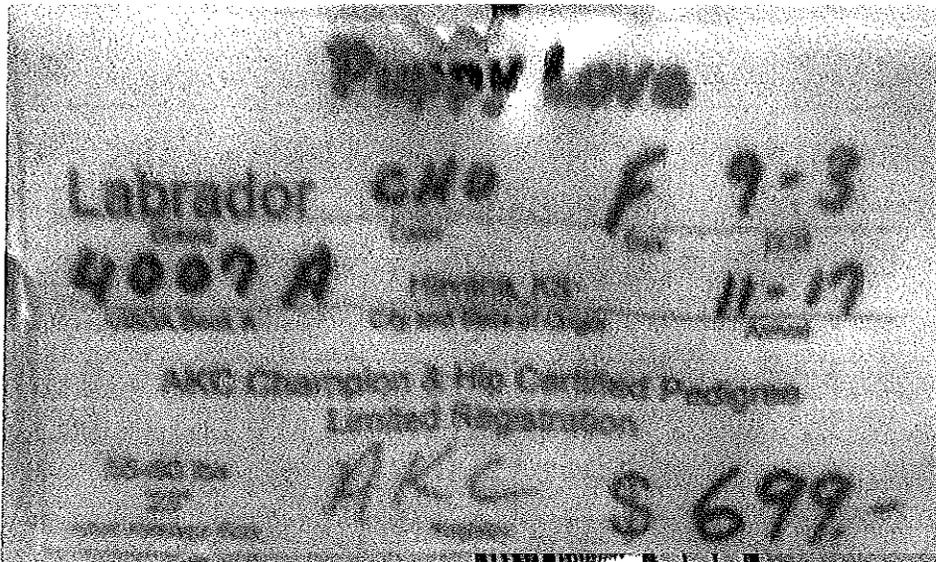
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Guppies to Puppies – Cromwell

Per volunteer visit: Only 2 puppies in store, from in-state breeder. Sign stating that they only sell puppies from local breeders so they may not always have puppies in store. This is the only store seen to be in full compliance because they are not purchasing out of state puppies.

Puppy Love – Danbury

Separate testimony with pictures below also submitted by Adrien Zap. This store is not in compliance of current law. The only thing a customer would know is the city and state of a puppy's origin. The "USDA Book #'' is not a valid USDA license number, it may correspond to store's internal records – it would mean nothing to a customer.



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The Pet Company – Danbury

Separate testimony with photos below also submitted by Adrien Zap. This store is not in full compliance of current law. Full addresses of breeders and brokers not posted conspicuously.

UNITED PET SUPPLY, INC. PET COMPANY

Breed Italian Greyhound Sex M

ID # 159651 Birthday 10/3/09

My Veterinarian's Name Is DR. BAFF

Located At PLUM TREES ANIMAL HOSPITAL

I was initially examined here on _____

I was raised by Elizabeth Rohrs in OK

And supplied to you by LAMBRIAR in KS

UNITED PET SUPPLY, INC. PET COMPANY

Breed Italian Greyhound Sex M

ID # 159688 Birthday 9/19/09

My Veterinarian's Name Is DR. BAFF

Located At PLUM TREES ANIMAL HOSPITAL

I was initially examined here on _____

I was raised by Amey Evans in MO

And supplied to you by Hunk in MO

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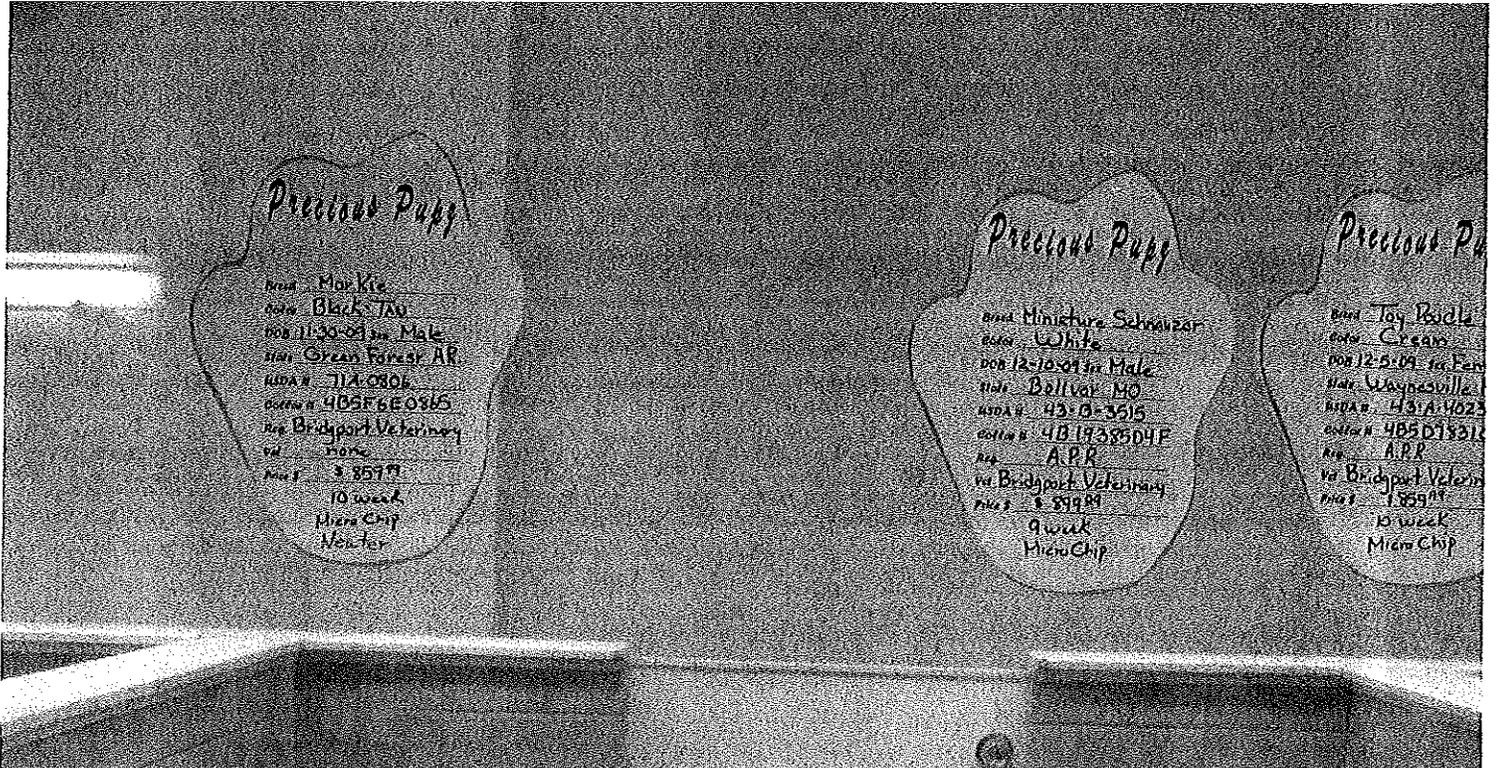
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Precious Pupz – East Haven

Large cards on wall, within 10 feet of puppies. Only information shown is breeder city, state and USDA license number (which would mean nothing to the average consumer). If you Google the following USDA numbers, you can see brief videos of where the parents of these puppies spend their entire lives in Missouri: 43A4023 and 43B3515.



Fin & Feather – Groton

Index cards taped within 10 feet of puppies. Did not give full breeder address. Broker listed, but again without full address.

Family Pet Center (Debby's Petland) – Manchester

Paperwork for puppies in one stack, hanging on a clipboard (meaning each puppy's information was not posted conspicuously). This stack of papers was near some puppies, but not others. Volunteers looked briefly at papers and noted some papers listed full breeder information, others did not. Broker information WAS listed, likely because the broker (Hunte Corporation) owns the store. Volunteers told by store employee they were not allowed to copy down any information from paperwork without purchasing a puppy. Store employee threatened to call security and removed the paperwork from view. Volunteer returned the following day and noted that clipboard with paperwork was hanging high up out of reach, and a rubber band had been placed around all papers.

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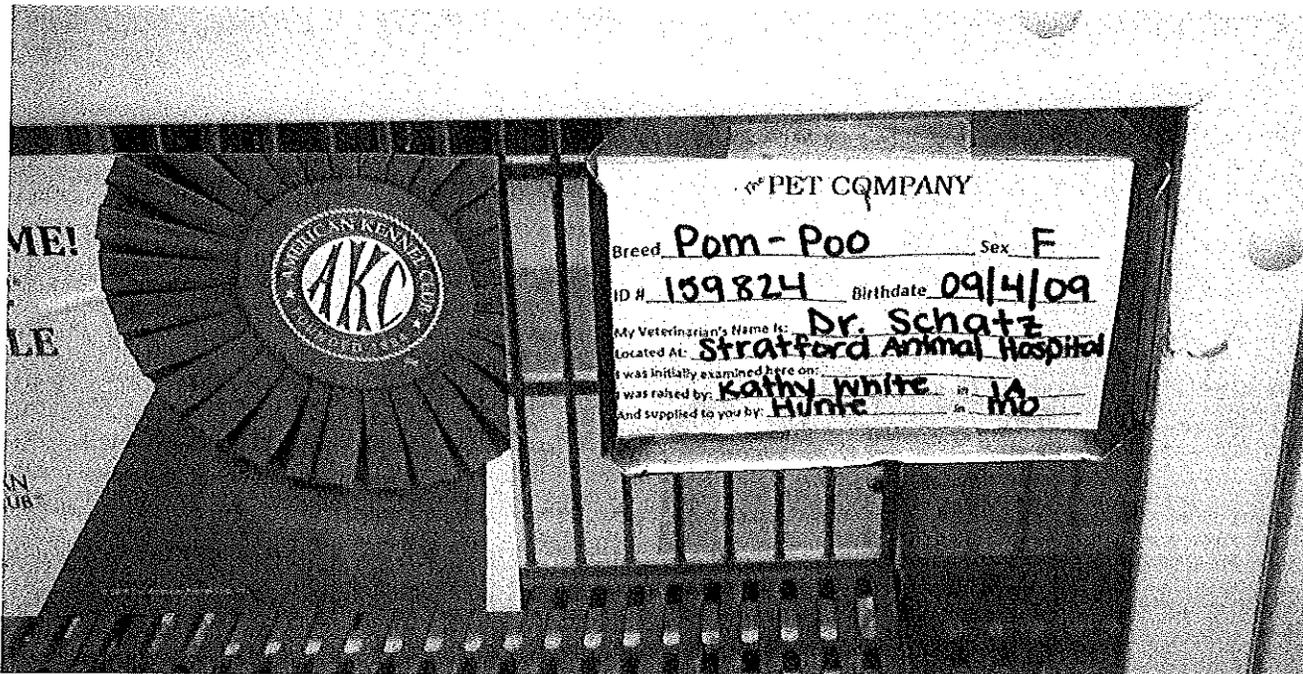
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The Dog House 1 – Manchester

Information for some of the puppies displayed within 10 feet. Full address of breeders was not listed for any, nor broker information if applicable. Several puppies had no information.

The Pet Company – Milford

Per volunteer visit: Breeder and broker city and state listed within 10 feet, but not complete addresses of either.



True Breeders – Ridgefield

A new store. Information for puppies is messy and incomplete, stating only breeder name, city and state of origin. Store owner first told me some of her puppies are from NY, then said, "My breeders have summer homes in CT, and that's how I'm getting around the USDA breeder licensing requirement." This is illegal if the dogs were not born in CT and were transported over state line. When owner very reluctantly and quickly showed paperwork from behind her desk for one of the puppies, the CT address listed may be the store owner's mother's home address.

Realm of Pets – Southington

Per volunteer visit: Breeder city and state listed within 10 feet, but not complete addresses.

Pet Center – Torrington

A thorough check of the store revealed NO information about puppies' origin, only price tags.

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All Pets – Wallingford

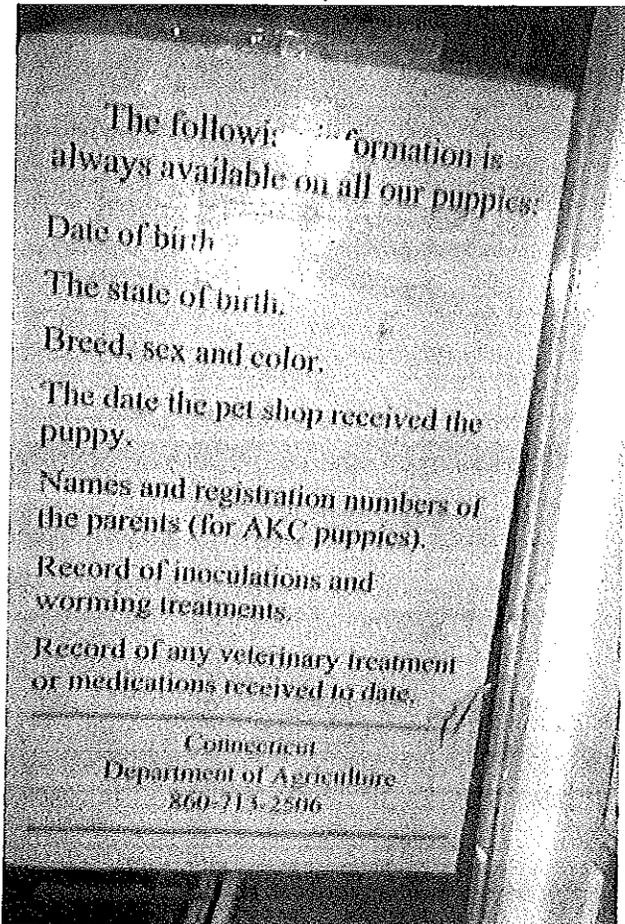
Per volunteer visit: Breeder city and state listed within 10 feet, but not complete addresses. There was a separate sheet listing more complete information, but did not correspond with which puppy came from which breeder.

The Puppy Center – West Hartford

Information for puppies listed on glass in front of large pen with puppies inside. Full address of breeder not shown, nor broker information if applicable. Store employee stated she didn't think the breeders would want their addresses posted publicly.

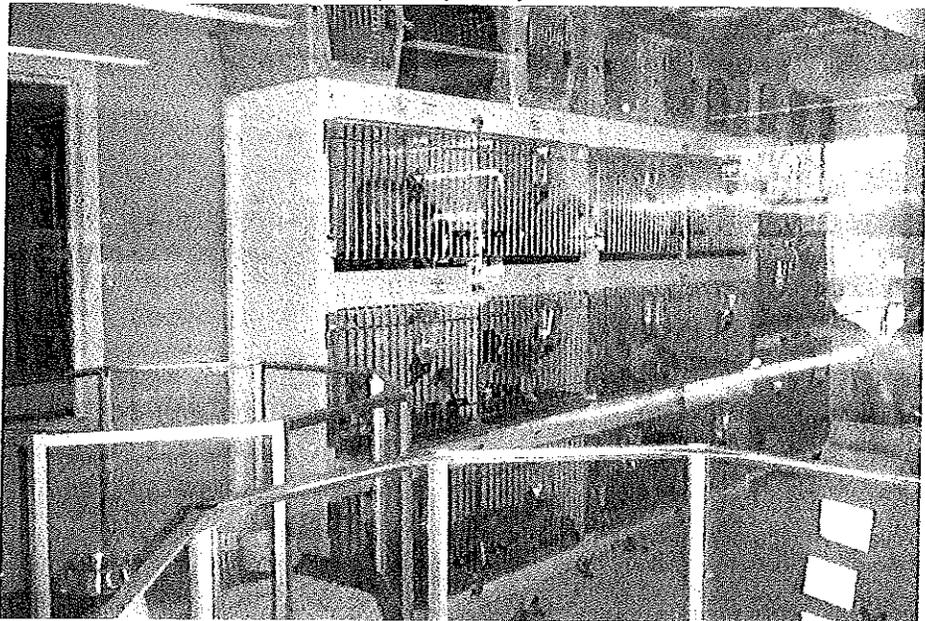
Puppies of Westport – Westport

Puppies kept in cages behind glassed-in "nursery" area, and brought out individually to customers. The information on the cages is incomplete and difficult to see from distance customer is kept from puppies. Only the city and state of puppy's origin is listed, with a USDA license #, which would mean nothing to a customer. Note on the picture: The USDA number is not even written correctly, it should be 43B, not 43S.



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Puppies of Westport – Westport (cont')



Puppies of Westport – Westport (cont') – DECEMBER 2009 photo

