



I am a founding member of the Westport Coalition Against Puppy Mills, a grass roots group of animal welfare advocates that came together 7 years ago after a store opened in our town and very publicly stated that they don't buy from puppy mills. They not only told that to anyone that would listen, but they had a big NO PUPPY MILL sign in their window for the first few years and their staff even wore "NO PUPPY MILL buttons!

So, together, with a number of like minded animal advocates, we started researching this store's NO PUPPY MILL claim to see if it could possibly be true and, of course, we found it was not at all true and there was no question this store was buying from puppy mills while denying it to consumers and getting away with it.

So, when asked for ways to "Improve the Puppy Industry and Ensure Healthy Animals in CT", I would say - CT should simply not provide outlets for the sale of puppy mill puppies. Say No to Puppy Mills which is exactly what our local store set out to do, but they just didn't honor their commitment and they falsely advertised - but they can make it true - by helping to rescue the thousands of puppies and pregnant dogs routinely euthanized in shelters across the country.

Other areas are doing it (LA, San Diego, Austin, Albuquerque - why not CT)? What do we have to lose?

This is not an industry that will self regulate. This is an industry that has a lot to hide and has been getting away with it for decades. Transparency is highly lacking as this is all about making a profit and not treating dogs and puppies humanely.

I've heard some in the puppy industry state that providing 3 years of clean USDA inspection reports is the answer and will clean up the problem. That is pointless and would just continue to mislead consumers into thinking that USDA Licensed actually means something and that they are humane facilities. The average consumer does not know what USDA licensed means and that it is perfectly legal to keep dogs in cages 6 inches taller and longer than their bodies for life (see dishwasher beagle image) and never get out. USDA Licensed does not certify a humane business. It's the same way that people think that "AKC registered" actually guarantees quality - which it doesn't. AKC is simply a registry.

USDA does a terrible job enforcing existing laws - see Inspector General's audit of the USDA. They don't have enough inspectors. Their legal requirements for minimum standards of care are shocking and horrifying - basically survival standards. The general public doesn't know any of this.

The USDA currently only recommends that "breeders" have veterinarians visit a minimum of once a year. Some of these facilities have thousands of dogs. Can you imagine that many dogs without vet care? This is what USDA licensed allows legally and if the general public actually knew all this, they would never buy a pet store puppy. Research has proven this.

The pet industry is a \$55.5 Billion/year industry and is one of the very few recession proof categories. There are plenty of people profiting in the pet industry without abusing and neglecting animals. The puppy industry is never going to come clean. We can't continue to allow this cover this up and enable this industry.

We can close the door to this deplorable business in CT, just like they have done elsewhere. This is a growing, humane trend and I'm proud to be a part of a group that is finally exposing the truth about the pet store puppies for the first time in this state. Once you learn the truth, I'm sure you will agree that CT should say no to the commercial puppy trade.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak today.

Allison Allen

Norwalk CT

917-484-2613

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