

## Kess, Quinn

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**From:** Laurie Lawless [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 02, 2013 10:40 AM  
**To:** CTPS  
**Subject:** Letter to the Task Force regarding Humane Legislation for Pet Stores in CT

Hello Task Force,

My name is Laurie Lawless and I am writing to you today in hopes that you hear my testimony regarding the new legislation hoping to bring regulation to the Connecticut Pet Shop industry.

I have spent the last six years of my life working with dogs in many different capacities. More specifically, the majority of my experience comes from working (4 years) at Wags Doggie Daycamp and Boarding in Danbury, CT, home of American Breeders Puppies & Kittens and Puppy Love. I would like to state that I do not speak on the behalf of the owners of Wags Doggie Daycamp and Boarding, just to clarify.

I see dogs, lots of dogs, every single day. Many come from rescue, but many also come from breeders and pet stores. Now, the dogs that come from breeders, you can tell. They were bred with care and knowledge of the breed. These dogs represent their breeds incredibly well. The ones that come from the pet stores, including the Danbury ones, are not bred well. You can tell that they come from facilities where they have been over bred. They generally "look" like their breed should, but to a trained eye, you can drastically see the different in these dogs; a large under bite (Boxers), too tall and lanky (Labrador Retrievers), bulging eyes (Cavaliers & Pugs), etc. These dogs many times also have a totally different behavioral aspect as well – you can just tell that mentally something is off with some of these dogs. It's really astonishing.

Besides the fact that these puppy-mill dogs are disgracing the gene pool of specific dog breeds in general, these pet stores don't really have to deal with the flip side of how they affect the CT dog population. All they get to see is the dog going home with a family. They don't get to see the portion in which that dog is neglected, abused, surrendered to a shelter, listed on Craig's List etc. For about 8 months I worked as the adoption counselor at a local shelter, and helped with screening and placing intakes. We would get phone calls all the time from people wanting to surrender their 6/7/8 month old dog they had literally just purchased because "it got too big," "needed more attention," and the worst of it, "I can't afford to take it to the vet," which always makes you wonder where they came up with the money to purchase the dog in the first place.

I remember one family specifically, came to the shelter one weekend. The dad worked full-time, the mom worked two jobs and they had three children of various ages. They wanted a puppy, even though they had never had a dog before. After speaking with them for about an hour explaining the time commitment, energy, consistency, money, training, food, - literally everything about owning a puppy, I showed them a few 2-3 year old dogs that were much calmer, already house broken and needed less attention. The family seemed happy and said they would be back eventually to think about adoption.

About two weeks later I got a phone call from a woman. "We just bought a Shih-Tzu puppy 10 days ago, he won't stop barking, we don't have time for him, can I please bring him in?" the woman ask. I told her to bring him in as soon as she could. An hour later, in comes the family I had been working with just a week and a half prior, holding the Shih-Tzu under his front arms, with his rear legs hanging. He was soaking wet and looked very lethargic. "Is this dog sick? Is he wet from washing him?" I asked. She repeatedly said she didn't know, he just wouldn't stop barking and had to go out all the time. Pretty much this was a sick dog, and these uneducated owners, had no idea what to do with it. The father of the family wouldn't even look at me and mumbled under his breath that he was sorry he hadn't listened to me, and instead went and purchased this puppy. Whatever.

Later that night, the little puppy was vomiting and having diarrhea all over his kennel to the point where he lost consciousness and had to be rushed to the 24-hour clinic for fluids. After test results came back, this puppy had not one, not two, but three parasites that nearly killed him!! His poor, little body was fighting Hook Worm, Coccidia and Giardia simultaneously. While the pet store had a few records of him receiving some de-worming medication, it was obvious it hadn't been followed up on, and they in no way had educated this family on the condition this dog had.

It is my belief that if that dog had stayed with that family, he would have died from something easily treatable, not because the family didn't like or love the dog, but because they were uneducated by the pet store on how to properly care for him. Second of all, this "reputable" pet store had sold this family a very, very sick dog- so much for all of their health guarantees. According to the family, the store refused to take the dog back because he had been purchased on "clearance" price at 6-months old. Unbelievable.

This is an anecdotal story, and I get that, but from my experience this is not a singular incident. We had quite a few other dogs at the shelter who were purchased from pet stores and abandoned by their owners, months or years down the road. One time a pet store in Westchester literally handed us two 6-month old puppies because they couldn't sell them

– they didn't even know we were from a shelter, because all they asked for was a driver's license. So for pet shop owners to sit there and say they are responsible, care about their dogs and that their dogs don't end up in shelters and add to the problems of overpopulation in our communities is entirely a false statement.

I won't even get into the horrors of the puppy mills in which the majority of these dogs come from, because realistically that is a national issue that needs to be addressed by the federal government. But what we can do is regulate here in Connecticut, where our pet stores are allowed to get their dogs from. If they are importing all of these dogs from out of state "breeders", they can definitely get them from high-kill shelters and local shelters too. They can definitely purchase dogs from known local kennels, rather than brokers and mass breeding facilities. There are other options for pets in the state.

Please consider this legislation in Connecticut. It may not be perfect but it's a good start to help curb pet over population, and would stop our state from supporting a cruel and unforgiving industry. Please call me with any questions, I'm more than happy to answer them!

-Laurie Lawless  
Danbury, CT

Laurie Lawless

