

To the Task Force Concerning the Sale of Cats and Dogs in Pet Shops,

I fully support legislation that would prohibit pet shops from selling puppies and kittens from commercial breeding facilities. The conditions in commercial breeding facilities are inhumane and harmful to both the breeding dogs and their puppies that are sold in our pet shops.

Several individuals at the October 16, 2013 hearing provided evidence that puppies sold in Connecticut pet shops are coming from USDA licensed and inspected, commercial breeding facilities. Information provided in the inspection reports indicates that the breeders pay little to no attention to the welfare of their animals. One such example is Valente Rios, USDA Certificate No. 43-A-5652, sells to American Breeders in Danbury; Inspection Report dated Jan. 24, 2012; 238 adult dogs and 73 puppies; 20 violations that included "There were 14 animal within the facility that were identified with veterinary care issues."

"female poodle...observed to be very lethargic and not moving around her enclosure. When the inspectors questioned the licensee about this dog he informed them that they were treating this dog for a wound under her right leg. Upon closer observation this dog had a large open gaping wound, approximately 4 inches in diameter. The muscle tissue and body wall underneath could be seen. The licensee stated that he had taken this dog to the veterinarian but could not recall the exact date or produce documentation."

"Female Yorkshire Terrier...observed by the inspector to be withdrawn and huddled in the corner of her enclosure...The dog was warm to the touch, had a hard lump on the lower left part of her abdomen. This dog had generalized hair loss on her chest, abdomen and inside areas of her back legs....The licensee had no documentation on this dogs condition and has not consulted with a veterinarian."

Over a year later Valente Rios is still in business. He was inspected five more times in 2012 and three times in 2013 with up to 5 violations of basic animal care standards at each inspection, often with repeat violations.

Inspection dated Jan 24, 2013; 187 adult dogs and 53 puppies; 3 violations: "female Yorkshire Terrier...swollen and reddened area on one of the pads...This is a repeat non-compliant item," "In 4 enclosures, affecting 13 dogs, there were sharp points from wires pointing inward into the enclosure, and at dog level," "In 17 enclosures, affecting 44 dogs, there more than a daily accumulation of fecal material present.."

Inspection dated Jul 24, 2013; 197 adult dogs and 70 puppies; 2 violations: "female Maltese/Poodle...has brown crusted material around both eyes and a white creamy discharge in the right eye. The licensee had not noticed this until it was brought to his attention... female Maltese/Poodle...two linear wounds on her left side, approximately 2 inches in length. The licensee was not aware of this dogs condition...male Maltese/Yorkshire Terrier...skin on the inside of the ear flap and upper part of the ear canal has become thickened with a dark colored discharge...The licensee was not aware of this condition until it was pointed out to him by the inspectors...This is a repeat non-compliant item."

While there is documented evidence that the animals in commercial breeding facilities are being maintained in inadequate conditions, scientific research has shown that commercial breeding facilities are harmful to the psychological health and welfare of both the breeding dogs and puppies that are sold in pet shops. A comparison of former breeding dogs from puppy mills with pet dogs showed that breeding dogs from puppy mills developed long-term fears and phobias, compulsive behaviors, and difficulty coping with normal existence (1). Another study showed that puppies purchased from pet shops are more likely to develop behavioral problems as adults

compared with dogs obtained from noncommercial breeders (2, 3). The difference between the two groups of dogs could be attributed to the stress experienced in the commercial breeding environment by the pregnant mother and puppies.

Commercial breeding facilities cause so much harm not only to the animals, but also to the unsuspecting consumer. How heartbreaking it is to fall in love with that puppy in the window, only to find out that your four-legged friend has extensive and expensive health issues resulting from inhumane breeding practices. Thirty-three jurisdictions in the United States (4) have already decided not to support these commercial breeders and it is time for Connecticut to do the same.

It is possible to have a successful business without selling puppies and kittens. There are 130 pet shops in Connecticut and 115 do not sell puppies and kittens from commercial breeders. There are also 41 pet shops in the US with rescued dogs for adoption (5). One of these stores, H3 Pet Supply, is in Connecticut. This number does not include the PetSmart and Petco stores that also offer dogs and cats for adoption. Sixteen of the 41 stores converted from selling puppies to an adoption only model. Connecticut pet shops selling puppies and kittens will not go out of business if they adopt a humane business model unless they choose to go out of business.

The puppies sold in 15 Connecticut pet shops come from inhumane, commercial breeding facilities. Pet shops can be successful without selling animals from these sources. I encourage you to recommend legislation that would ban the sale of cats and dogs from commercial breeders in Connecticut pet shops. Please show that Connecticut cares about animal welfare.

Thank you,

Susan Armknecht
Groton, CT

References:

- 1) McMillan, FD, Duffy, DL, Serpell, JA. 2011. Mental health of dogs formerly used as 'breeding stock' in commercial breeding establishments. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 135: 86-94.
- 2) McMillan, FD, Serpell, JA, Duffy, DL, Masaoud, E, Dohoo, IR. 2013. Differences in behavioral characteristics between dogs obtained as puppies from pet stores and those obtained from noncommercial breeders. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 242: 1359-1363.
- 3) Wagh, M. 2013. Penn vet study finds pet store puppies come with increased risk. *Penn Current*.
<http://www.upenn.edu/pennnews/current/2013-05-16/latest-news/penn-vet-study-finds-pet-store-puppies-come-increased-risk>
- 4) <http://bestfriends.org/Resources/No-Kill-Resources/Puppy-mill-initiatives/Fighting-Puppy-Mills/Jurisdictions-with-retail-pet-sale-bans/>. Cited November 30, 2013.
- 5) <http://bestfriends.org/Resources/No-Kill-Resources/Puppy-mill-initiatives/Fighting-Puppy-Mills/Pet-Stores-with-Rescued-Dogs-for-Adoption/>. Cited November 30, 2013.

December 3, 2013

As a shelter, Paws has historically taken in relinquished pet store puppies. We are not alone as many other rescue organizations are confronted with the same dilemma.

The reason for relinquishment of pet store puppies are numerous, yet fairly consistent;

- The landlord won't allow the pet
- Owners find that puppies are much too time consuming
- The puppies become sick, the pet stores never take them back, so owners can't afford the vet bills

Paws stands firmly on the conviction that pet store puppy mill puppies should not be sold in CT or anywhere for that matter. This testimonial is not a means to finger point or conduct a witch hunt towards specific individuals, but rather serve as a vehicle to educate the public and lawmakers. The facts concerning puppy mill dogs stand alone as an indictment of the pet store business.

The facts about puppy mills corroborate the nefarious relationship with pet stores.

Pet stores acquire puppies from puppy mills to sell for a profit. After a litter is born, the puppies are taken from their mother before being properly weaned and sold to pet stores.

No matter how reputable the claim of pet store owners, they are making a profit off of puppy mill "merchandise". That is exactly what they are regarded, merchandise commodities, over a \$1000 to a retail pet owner.

It is a known fact in the welfare arena that reputable breeders do not sell their dogs to pet stores.

The following facts concerning puppy mills underscore the need to shut them down and stop the sale of these dogs in pet stores.

1. 99% of puppies sold in pet stores come from puppy mills. There are 15,00 puppy mills in the US alone
2. There are 35,000 pet stores in America
3. 500,000 puppies are born in puppy mills and sold in pet stores every year on the United States
4. Nearly 100% of all puppies in pet stores have parasites when purchased
5. 48% of puppies being sold in pet stores are ill, incubating an illness or harboring an unseen congenital medical issue
6. Every year retail pet stores across America sell 500,000 dogs, while 5 to 7 million dogs enter shelters

The education concerning puppy mills takes on an added dimension with this factual expose;

A puppy mill is a commercial dog breeding facility that focuses solely on increasing profit with little overhead cost. The least priority is the health and welfare of the animals. Puppy mills breed a female dog every time she is in heat; a five year old dog could potentially have given birth to 10 litters. Animals in puppy mills spend most of their lives in cramped cages, no play or exercise. Water and food provided is contaminated; crawling with bugs. Puppies are often malnourished. Common medical concerns are swollen, bleeding paws, feet falling through the wire cages, some tooth decay, ear infections, dehydration, lesions on eyes causing blindness and muscular and skeletal deformities.

Most puppy mills provide no medical care, climate control or protection from the elements. They are forced to live in their own urine and feces for indefinite periods of time.

With this abhorrent information in hand, we must turn ourselves to the responsibility we have to ensure the safety and well-being of living creatures. Our society provides every individual the right and freedom to care for themselves and families by way of a chosen job or career. That given right, however should not be at the expense of dogs that can't defend themselves or speak about the atrocities they endure.

If one looks at this issue in the most simplistic manner, it should be ethically clear that pet store/puppy mill dogs are not retail or merchandise. Dogs should not be bred solely for the purpose of establishing a business that facilitates financial profit. Purchasers are lured into pet stores with promises of "pure bred" puppies. These individuals are not screened and for good reason. Their no return policy is iron clad. Once payment is made and that dog leaves the store, they are no longer their responsibility. As a shelter director, I can, from first-hand experience attest to the fact that these dogs ultimately end up in the already overburdened, non-profit shelter system.

Shelters do not profit when puppies come to us to be rehomed, the puppies become victims of the mills and the stores and the stores are the only ones making a profit!

We must as a society as a whole and ambassadors of animal welfare stand committed to the mission of speaking for these dogs and stop the abuse, as well as devaluation of their rights to live and flourish. The greed and callousness of particular factions has exacted a price on their heads. The price that puppy mill/pet store puppies have and continue to pay is too high a price. We cannot condone it, support it nor ignore it. There is no acceptable reason for the mills and stores to victimize any longer.

Respectfully submitted,

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Shelter Director

Pet Animal Welfare Society

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