



## The environmental impacts of puppy mills

A puppy mill is “a dog breeding operation in which the health of the dogs is disregarded in order to maintain a low overhead and maximize profits.” *Avenson v. Zegart*, 577 F. Supp. 958, Dist. Court, Minnesota (1984). Dogs aren’t the only creatures harmed by puppy mills, however: State and federal inspection reports reveal irresponsible waste management practices (often used to maximize profits) that are harmful to the environment. Specifically, puppy mill operators often improperly dispose of feces, urine and animal carcasses.

- A report by Missourians for the Protection of Dogs in 2010 uncovered numerous cases in which dog dealers improperly disposed of dog carcasses in apparent violation of environmental laws, including one dealer who was disposing of approximately 200 pounds of dead animals a month.
- When dog feces enters the water, pathogens can seep into aquifers, drain into streams and make their way into rivers and other sources of public drinking water. The pathogens in dog feces can cause harmful and even deadly infections in humans. In one documented case, a stream downhill from a West Virginia puppy mill was found to have a coliform bacteria load 400 times greater than the legal limit.
- Because puppy mill operators often ignore basic animal care, dogs in these facilities are often infected with pathogens. These pathogens are excreted in the dogs’ feces and transfer to the soil. Because land can harbor pathogens much longer than water or air, humans and animals can become infected months—sometimes even years—after waste decomposes simply by coming into contact with contaminated soil. Disease-causing organisms that can be transmitted from dogs to humans include hookworms, large roundworms, cryptosporidium and giardia.
- Animal waste inevitably leads to the aerosolization of microbial pathogens, endotoxins and dust particles. Decomposition of waste creates ammonia, some of which converts to particulates that can be carried by the wind into the atmosphere. Because these particles last days longer than the gaseous form of ammonia, air currents can transport them as much as 600 miles. These particulates can settle onto vegetation, harming native plants more than invasive species.
- In puppy mill facilities it is typical for dog feces to be left on the ground to fester for long periods, producing methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

Animal abuse and environmental impacts are inextricably linked. **Better regulation would not only improve the welfare of the dogs, but also the quality of water, soil and air.**

Find out more information visit [humanesociety.org/pupppymills](https://www.humanesociety.org/pupppymills).

