



## The cruelty behind the cuteness

### END PUPPY MILLS

If you buy a puppy from a pet store, or from any breeder you haven't met in person, you might be supporting the notorious puppy mill industry. Puppy mills are breeding businesses that raise dogs in shockingly poor conditions. "Breeding stock" animals are caged and continually bred for years, without human companionship and with little hope of ever becoming part of a family. After their fertility wanes, breeding animals may be abandoned, sold to another mill or even killed. The result of all this breeding? Millions of puppies, many with health and behavior problems not obvious at the time of purchase.

### AVOID PET STORES

Behind the friendly façade of pet stores often lies the ugly reality of these puppy mills. There's only one sure way to combat mass breeding operations: Don't support them. No matter how cute the puppy in the pet store is, please don't buy her. You may

feel like you're "rescuing" her, but in reality you're freeing up space for another puppy mill "product" while supporting and encouraging an industry based on abuse. Unless you personally visit the place where your puppy was born and raised—and where the puppy's parents live—there's no way to know that your puppy didn't come from a puppy mill, no matter what a sales clerk tells you.

### QUESTION WEBSITES AND CLASSIFIEDS

Don't believe everything you see online or in the classifieds. If you think you've found the perfect breeder on a website that includes adorable photos, boasts of how much they cherish their "fur babies" and promises that they sell exclusively to "qualified homes," be alert—such websites could be run by puppy mills. There's no way to know whether you're dealing with a puppy mill by simply looking at a website or talking to someone over the phone. What's more, a Better Business Bureau

study found that thousands of online ads are fraudulent, and many buyers who send money never even receive a puppy at all.

Selling online and through classified ads allows puppy mill operators to sell directly to consumers—no pet store required. It's more profitable, and it allows puppy mills in many states to avoid inspection. Remember that puppy mills house their dogs in deplorable conditions and churn out puppies for quick sale and shipment.

Don't support this cruelty: Always visit the breeder's home in person before you buy.

### ADOPT, DON'T SHOP

Shelters and rescues are full of lovable dogs in need of a family. Mixed-breed dogs have plenty to offer, and shelters often have mature dogs who have already had some training. If you're set on a specific breed, you can still adopt: Shelters and breed rescue groups have purebred dogs available for adoption every day.



Common conditions at puppy mills include breeding dogs kept continually in cages, unsanitary conditions, no protection from the elements, and inadequate food and water. Yet most puppy buyers who purchase from a puppy mill never see these conditions, because many puppy mill dogs are sold online or through pet stores.

For help finding a breed rescue or shelter in your area, contact us at 202-452-1100 or 1255 23<sup>rd</sup> St. NW, Suite 450, Washington, D.C. 20037, or visit [humanesociety.org/puppy](https://www.humanesociety.org/puppy).

