

Puppy Mills



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What is a puppy mill? Puppy mills are breeding facilities that produce puppies in large numbers. The puppies are sold either directly to the public via the Internet, newspaper ads, at the mill itself, or are sold to brokers and pet shops across the country. The documented problems of puppy mills include overbreeding, inbreeding, minimal veterinary care, poor quality of food and shelter, lack of socialization with humans, overcrowded cages, and the killing of unwanted animals. To the unwitting consumer, this situation frequently means buying a puppy facing an array of immediate veterinary problems or harboring genetically borne diseases that do not appear until years later. In 1994, *Time* magazine estimated that as many as 25% of purebred dogs were afflicted with serious genetic problems.

Thousands of these breeding operations currently exist in the United States, many of them despite repeated violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is charged with enforcing the AWA; however, with 96 inspectors nationwide who oversee not only the thousands of puppy mills, but also zoos, circuses, laboratories, and animals transported via commercial airlines, they are an agency stretched thin.

What You Can Do To close down puppy mills and ensure the safety and humane treatment of dogs trapped in commercial kennels, you can:

- Encourage state and federal officials to stop the mass production and exportation of sick and traumatized dogs. In addition to passing new laws, legislators can demand that existing laws be enforced.
- Urge other people not to buy puppies from pet stores, over the Internet, or from newspaper ads.
- Visit a local pet store to determine where it obtains its puppies. Don't be misled by claims that its dogs were not bred in puppy mills. Insist on seeing breed registry papers or the interstate health certificate for each puppy. The papers will list the breeder's and/or wholesaler's name and address.
- Write letters to the editor about puppy mills and pet stores. Explain the mills' inhumane treatment of puppies and their contribution to pet overpopulation. For the Florida Today paper mail letters to:
Your Views FLORIDA TODAY
P.O. Box 419000 Melbourne, FL 32941-9000
Fax letters to: (321) 255-9550
E-mail letters to: letters@floridatoday.com.

- Contact your member of the U.S. House of Representatives and your two U.S. Senators, asking them to urge the USDA to strictly enforce the Animal Welfare Act and to support efforts to increase funding for USDA/Animal Care.

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<http://martinez.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContactInformation.ContactForm>

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