

## **Petland Talking Points**

### **TOP MESSAGES**

- **Petland stores investigated by The HSUS have been misleading customers about where their puppies come from. Petland claims it knows its breeders and deals only with those who have "the highest standards of pet care," and that they NEVER deal with puppy mills. Our investigation revealed that the stores investigated DO buy puppy mill puppies.**
- **The tales told by Petland are typical of pet store sales. The HSUS has heard similar claims from other pet stores across the U.S.**
- **We are asking Petland to get out of the puppy mill support business and to stop selling puppies.**

### **SECONDARY MESSAGES**

- **The greatest victims are the breeding parents. Mother and father dogs will spend their lifetimes locked in cages, churning out puppies for pet store sales.**
- **Puppy mills sell their puppies through pet stores, fancy internet sites and even newspaper classified ads. Puppy buyers MUST go and visit where their puppy was born and see how the parents are treated before handing over any money.**
- **Puppy mills thrive because people buy the puppies. The dog loving, puppy buying public has it in its power to stop puppy mills for good simply by making sure they never buy a puppy mill puppy.**
- **People can help by contacting Petland and asking them to stop selling puppy mill puppies through The HSUS' Stop Puppy Mills campaign website at [www.humanesociety.org/pupmills](http://www.humanesociety.org/pupmills).**

## **Q & A**

### **How long was your investigation?**

The investigation took place over 8 months

### **What was found in this investigation?**

- Petland stores investigated by The HSUS were caught doing what many pet stores across the country do every day: misleading their customers about where the puppies come from.
- HSUS investigator(s) caught Petland store employees stating that “we never buy from puppy mills,” when in fact our investigation revealed that all of the stores investigated have bought puppies from puppy mills.

### **Where did the puppies actually come from?**

- HSUS investigators documented 322 different suppliers of almost 17,000 puppies. We visited at random 35 breeding and brokering operations that supply dogs to Petland stores, where we documented puppy mill conditions.
- Records were obtained through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. They revealed violations of the Animal Welfare Act at many of the puppy mills supplying Petland stores with puppies.

### **Were any laws broken?**

We continue to examine material gathered during the investigation. However, it is important to note that puppy mills are not illegal in the U.S. Laws exist that cover some puppy mills and are supposed to regulate how the animals are treated. Enforcement is notoriously lax however.

USDA inspection reports from many of the breeding operations that Petland stores buy from show a history of violations of the Animal Welfare Act. These inspection reports are publicly available.

### **Which Petland stores did you investigate?**

HSUS investigators visited Petland stores in FL, IN, MN, NV and OH. They also gathered information about origins of puppies supplied to stores in LA, MI, TX, KS and IL. In total they documented the sources of puppies sold to 76 different Petland stores.

### **How many places is Petland buying from?**

HSUS investigators documented 322 different operations in 10 states. Many Petland stores buy from brokers or over the Pet Board of Trade, an online seller, so this is not a complete list.

### **What states were the puppy mills in that the stores were buying from?**

The 322 breeders we documented Petland buying from were located in AL, AR, IA, IN, KS, MN, MO, OH, OK and SD, with by far the largest concentration of breeders being in MO and the Midwest.

## **Petland claims to help find homes for unwanted pets through its “Adopt a Pet” Program. Isn’t it helping?**

Although Petland’s corporate website claims that the company helps find homes for homeless pets, The HSUS called every Petland store in the country and found that many of them do not participate in the Adopt-a-Pet program at all. Of those stores that do, many admitted that the majority of their “Adopt-a-Pets” are actually Petland puppies that the store had to mark down in price because they did not sell at full price, or puppies who were returned to the store by their buyers—not dogs from shelters.

## **Aren’t there laws to stop this?**

- Sadly, puppy mills are legal in the U.S.; dogs are treated like agricultural crops, not the companion animals they are.
- There are some laws that are supposed to ensure dogs are provided with the most basic of care – like being given clean water and getting veterinary care when they are sick or injured – but these laws say nothing about giving dogs attention or kindness.
- Some puppy mills (those that sell wholesale) are regulated under the federal Animal Welfare Act. The Act is enforced by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- Other puppy mills (those who sell directly to the pet owner) aren’t required to be licensed by the USDA. Some states do have inspection programs but most do not.
- Some states have “Puppy Lemon Laws” designed to protect the consumer by ensuring they can get their money back if their puppy dies or is severely ill soon after purchase. These laws do nothing however to address the cruelty that is typical in puppy mills.

## **What is it like for dogs in puppy mills?**

- Dogs kept for breeding are treated like puppy making machines; their ONLY worth is tied to how many puppies they can produce.
- The dogs used for breeding will live their entire lives in cages, forced to breed as frequently as possible.
- Dogs who can no longer breed are destroyed or discarded.

## **What can the public do to avoid supporting puppy mills?**

- It is not difficult to avoid buying a puppy mill puppy – one simply checks out the breeder they are buying from by visiting their home and/or breeding kennel.
- Puppy mills thrive because people buy the puppies.
- The only way to truly stop puppy mills for good is for anyone who buys a puppy to investigate their breeder and visit the place where their puppy was born and see all areas where the puppy was raised and how the parents live.
- “Rescuing” dogs from pet stores only continues to fuel the puppy mill industry. The pet store owner just orders up another puppy to fill the empty cage.

## **Where should people get dogs and puppies?**

- We encourage everyone to make adoption their first choice; with so many animals in shelters in desperate need of a home, all animal lovers should be looking to help solve the problem of pet homelessness.

- Nationwide, one out of every four dogs in a shelter is a purebred.
- There are purebred rescue groups for every breed of dog.
- For families who want to purchase a puppy from a breeder, it is imperative that they see where their puppy was born and how the parents live and are treated.

### **How do you check out a breeder?**

- The HSUS has a “Good Breeder Checklist” available through our website, [www.humanesociety.org/puppy](http://www.humanesociety.org/puppy)
- The bottom line is that you should never buy a dog from anyone without going and seeing for yourself where the puppy was born and how the parents live.
- Significant suffering could be prevented if people simply checked out the person they are buying a puppy from because puppy mills thrive by hiding their dirty business from the public. Claims made by pet store sales staff and on breeder websites cannot be taken at face value.

### **Has The HSUS investigated other pet stores?**

- Yes, investigation has always been a necessary part of The HSUS’ efforts to fight puppy mills.
- Those who profit from puppy mills – including pet stores – know that the public would be horrified if they saw where their puppy came from. Because of this, puppy mills work intensely to hide their abusive business from public eyes.
- Undercover investigations are necessary because those who profit from puppy mills want to keep their dirty business hidden away and do not readily allow the public to visit.

### **Do puppy mills effect shelters?**

- Absolutely. Puppy mills are part of the pet overpopulation problem in the U.S.
- The HSUS estimates puppy mills pump 2-4 million puppies into the marketplace each year; these sales take homes away from dogs in shelters and rescue groups.

### **You say don’t buy the puppies, but don’t those puppies need homes too?**

- The problem with trying to “rescue” a puppy from a pet store is that the money often goes to feed the puppy mill industry. When someone takes a pet store puppy home, their money goes right back into the system, and can be used to buy another puppy mill puppy to fill the empty cage.
- It is imperative that the dog loving, puppy buying public stop supporting puppy mills by buying their puppies.

### **What if someone already bought a dog at Petland, can they still help?**

- Absolutely. People can contact us via our website [www.humanesociety.org/puppymills](http://www.humanesociety.org/puppymills) with their stories.

### **Is HSUS going to be taking any legal action against Petland or any of the breeders?**

- We are not ruling any action out at this point and encourage those who have purchased a puppy at Petland or who have other concerns to contact us via our website at [www.humanesociety.org/puppymills](http://www.humanesociety.org/puppymills) or by calling 202-452-1100 and asking to speak with someone in the Stop Puppy Mills campaign.

**What is The HSUS doing about puppy mills?**

- HSUS is working to educate the public about puppy mills and help dog-lovers avoid supporting that cruel industry unknowingly.
- HSUS is working to pass laws in order to provide dogs in puppy mills better care. Industry groups fight these laws – even those that are for very basic care or those ensuring veterinary care for sick or injured dogs.
- HSUS is taking an aggressive position in fighting puppy mills and those who sell puppy mill puppies, including investigations and litigation efforts like the class action lawsuit filed in Florida against puppy seller Wizard of Claws.

**How many puppy mills are there in the United States?**

- There are over 4,500 breeding operations licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture; The HSUS estimates roughly 80% of those operations are breeding dogs for the pet trade (roughly 3700).
- There are an unknown number of puppy mills not required to be licensed, estimates range from 5-10,000 of those operations.
- Unlicensed operations vary greatly in size from over 1,000 dogs down to smaller “mini-mills” who have 20-40 dogs. Conditions can be equally bad in these smaller puppy mills as they are in the massive sized operations.

**How did you do this investigation?**

We don't disclose investigative techniques to protect the confidentiality of our investigators and other intelligence sources.

**Did you work in the store?**

We don't disclose investigative techniques to protect the confidentiality of our investigators and other intelligence sources.