

Humane Society of the United States – Petland Investigation – November 2008

America's largest chain of puppy-selling pet stores, Petland Inc, is also the nation's largest retail supporter of puppy mills. There are more than 200 Petland stores worldwide, with about 140 in the U.S. These stores sell tens of thousands of puppies each year.

On November 20, The Humane Society of the United States revealed the results of a shocking eight-month investigation of Petland stores. The investigation reveals that Petland stores across the country have marketed puppy mill puppies to unsuspecting consumers.

About the investigation:

- HSUS investigators visited 21 Petland stores, including stores in Florida, Indiana, Minnesota, Nevada, and Ohio
- HSUS investigators visited 35 breeders and brokers (re-sellers) linked to Petland stores, including breeders in Kansas, Oklahoma, Minnesota and Missouri.
- Investigators researched health certificate import records of 322 breeders and brokers and almost 17,000 individual puppies linked to Petland stores.
- Investigators reviewed more than 100 state and federal inspection reports of breeders and brokers linked to Petland stores.

The investigation revealed that:

- Despite assurances by staff at Petland stores visited by The HSUS and on Petland's corporate website that the company knows its breeders and deals only with those who have "the highest standards of pet care," many of the puppies sold at Petland stores come from massive commercial breeders in Missouri and other Midwestern puppy mill states, where hundreds of breeding dogs are packed into cramped, barren cages.
- When HSUS investigators visited 35 of the large-scale breeding operations linked to Petland stores, they witnessed puppy mills – places where puppies are factory farmed in large numbers. At many of the facilities, investigators saw appalling conditions: puppies living in filthy, barren cages reeking of urine, with inadequate care and socialization.
- Many of the puppies for sale at stores visited by The HSUS were not even supplied directly by breeders, but are purchased from a “middle man” -- large-scale “pet distributors,” otherwise known as brokers. Our investigation revealed that many of Petland’s brokers also buy from puppy mills.
- Some of Petland’s puppies are ordered online using a pet auction website called the Pet Board of Trade (PBT), demonstrating that many Petland stores are not screening breeders as the Petland corporate website claims – in fact, in some cases they may not even know the breeder’s name until after purchase.
- One of the most common sales pitches made by staff at Petland stores visited by The HSUS is that they use “USDA licensed” breeders. However, HSUS investigators reviewed USDA and state inspection reports for more than 100 of Petland’s breeders, and found that more than 60 percent of the reports listed serious violations of basic animal care regulations. Many USDA breeders exhibit a long history of substandard care and yet remained licensed. It is clear that Petland isn’t reviewing these publicly-available records to ensure that their breeders employ “the highest standards of pet care.”
- Documented USDA violations at some of Petland’s breeders and suppliers included: dirty, broken down enclosures; inadequate shelter from the cold; dogs kept in too-small cages; and inadequate veterinary care. Some of the breeders were found with sick or dead dogs in their cages.

While most of the puppies from puppy mills are eventually sold through pet stores or over the Internet, the unseen victims are the mother dogs, who are forced to live their entire lives behind bars without ever being part of a family or even seeing the outside of their cages.

Here is how dog lovers can help:

- Call or write a letter to Petland expressing your concern about puppy mills and asking Petland to stop selling puppies.
- Consumers who purchased a puppy from Petland should contact The HSUS directly by filling out the Share Your Story form on our website, humanesociety.org/pupmills.
- Never purchase a puppy from a pet store, over the Internet, or from anyone you haven't screened in person: consider adoption first.
- Take action against all puppy mills by participating in Puppy Mill Action Week this week! Details are available online at humanesociety.org/pupmills.