

Puppy Mills: Killing Man's Best Friend for Profit

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November 1, 2007

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Recent investigations into the frequent ailments of puppies have uncovered the ugly truth of puppy mills. Puppy mills are businesses that mass-produce puppies for profit and have turned into a multi-million dollar industry. The cruelty can be found all over the United States but is highly concentrated in states such as Kansas, Arkansas, Nebraska, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Although all fifty states have anti-cruelty laws in place they are seldom enforced in remote rural areas allowing people to continue to run their torture based businesses without much fear of consequences.

Puppy mills are breeding facilities that breed purebred dogs in large numbers with minimal care for the sole purpose of turning a profit. These puppies are then sold directly to the public via the Internet or newspapers and also to retail pet stores for consumer purchase. While in the mills the dogs and puppies are held in Auschwitz like conditions: their food infested with maggots, water that is green with algae, no interaction with humans, sometimes with little to no light, and shelter that does not protect them from the harsh elements. Placed in wire cages that are often not kept in good repair become rusty and leave cuts that lead to infection on the paws. Cleaning happens very seldom leaving the dogs to live in their own feces that are contaminated with viruses. Kept in confinement year after year causes these dogs start to go insane producing behaviors such as constantly running in circles and self-mutilation. No genetic testing is done to help detect and reduce serious medical conditions and as a result many puppies purchased in pet stores are being put to sleep very young because there is nothing left they can do to help. Responsible pet ownership starts with knowing your breeder cares about the quality of the breed.

Poor health of a pet leads not only to suffering in the animal, but to heartache for the owner. In USA Today there was an article about Mary Johnson and her puppy mill pet had to be

euthanized. Mooch, a Chihuahua-toy-poodle-mix seemed simply irresistible to Mary in the pet shop window. So, she went in, negotiated the price, and took him home. Over the next two months Mooch grew to be part of the family Mary described him as “her baby”. Everyone he met fell in love with him. Then, with no warning, he was in kidney failure. They took action over the next three days adding up to \$2,500 in veterinary bills. There was no hope to save the young life, and Mooch was euthanized, leaving Mary and her boyfriend devastated. They still keep two of Mooch’s toys along with his collar and tags to preserve his memory. Now you have to think of where dogs like Mooch come from. A funded rescue brought Cindy Doe and another rescue volunteer to a puppy mill to get the dogs out. Cindy said nothing could have prepared her for the sights she was going to see and a stench she would never be able to forget. She entered the poorly lit building with just enough light to see the horrid condition that the cries were coming from. The stench was so bad that her vision became blurred and she could feel her stomach in her throat. All around up to five dogs were crammed into small wooden boxes 5x3 in size. Some dogs in the boxes were pregnant and being trampled to death by other dogs trying to get to the end of the boxes for Cindy to touch. Some without water and food dish they were starving to death. One sight of a Boston Terrier will remain with her forever its eye was swollen to the size of a plum and hanging from its head. She wanted badly to save the all feeling that even in the wild they had a better chance of survival.

Last month dogs by the dozens were carted away from a barn in Virginia that had been raided by the Best Friends Animal Society to a care center in New York. Weeks earlier, 248 dogs were seized from a similar operation in Maine altogether rescuing 248 dogs that were in need of serious help. The human society has identified puppy mills as one the their top five problems and has assembled units that respond with people and equipment on large seizures like the one in

Maine where local agencies don't have the necessary resources. The Humane Society estimates that at least 10,000 unlicensed and unmonitored puppy mills are producing up to 4 million puppies a year. This has led to a serious over breeding problem despite the high demand for human companions. The conditions that the dogs and their offspring are being kept in have become an issue not only of inhumane care but also consumer fraud.

There are ways in which people can help to close down puppy mills and help save dogs trapped in commercial kennels. Write letters to your U.S. House of Representatives and your U.S. Senators urging them put pressure on the USDA to enforce the Animal Welfare Act. Spread the word! Every revolution starts with one voice. Let others know about the horrors of puppy mills and urge them not to buy puppies from pet stores or from Internet and newspaper ads. The less people buying from mills will decrease the demand and hopefully put some people out of business. If you do purchase a new puppy that could have possibly come from a puppy mill, file a Breeder Complaint form if your puppy is suffering from what appears to be a medical condition. Don't be naive, there are plenty of dogs in shelters and rescues that need homes. Don't feed the machine by buying from people who see the dogs as merely inventory. Contact a licensed breeder who loves and cares for the puppies they are selling as their own pets.

So, although you may think puppy mills are a thing of the past, in reality they are a severe problem. There is something everyone can do to help. If concentration camps weren't okay for humans, why should they be for dogs? Give every dog a chance to be man's best friend.