

Facts About Puppy Mill Legislation

Puppy mills are large-scale breeding facilities that mass-produce puppies for the pet trade. At more than 10,000 puppy mills across the United States, breeding dogs are crammed into small and filthy cages, denied veterinary care, exposed to extremes of heat and cold, and given no exercise or human attention. These puppy mills are cruel and the way these dogs are treated is wrong. Stronger legislation is needed to stop puppy mill abuses by establishing common sense standards for the proper care of dogs.

- **Puppy mills are inhumane.** Puppy mills frequently raise dogs in shockingly poor conditions. The breeding dogs in puppy mills are typically confined to small wire cages for life without adequate veterinary care, exercise or individual attention. Consumers across the country have reported purchasing puppy mill puppies with significant health and/or genetic conditions, causing high veterinary bills and emotional devastation for the families involved. Reports from the USDA Inspector General and the Missouri state auditor, as well as investigations performed by many national and local animal welfare organizations, indicate puppy mills have a longstanding history of cruel treatment that often goes unaddressed. Improving puppy mill laws will prevent needless animal suffering and will better protect consumers.
- **Stronger laws are needed to require puppy mills to meet dogs' most basic needs.** In puppy mills across the country, an estimated 500,000 breeding dogs are forced to live in cramped, barren wire cages for years on end. These dogs often don't have the basics of clean food and water, shelter from the blistering heat or bitter cold, regular veterinary care, or exercise outside their cages. Most pet owners would never consider putting their own dogs in a cage for the rest of their natural lives, yet thousands of consumers unknowingly purchase puppies every year who were bred in these conditions.
- **Once used up, the breeding dogs in puppy mills are often cruelly killed, abandoned, or sold at auction.** After being bred again and again, sometimes until their uteruses literally "prolapse" or protrude from their bodies, used up breeding dogs are often quickly discarded or killed when they can no longer turn a profit for their owners. Puppy mill operators often kill these dogs themselves to save on veterinary bills. Currently many states have no specific law that prevents puppy mill operators from destroying "used up" or unwanted dogs themselves.
- **More and more states are passing laws to crack down on puppy mill cruelty.** In the last three years, more than twenty states - including major puppy mill states such as Pennsylvania, Iowa, Oklahoma, and Missouri-- have passed laws to crack down on puppy mills by requiring basic care standards at mass-breeding facilities, requiring licensing and inspection of large-scale breeding facilities, or limiting the number of breeding dogs that can be kept at a single facility.
- **Opponents of stronger puppy mill laws are supported and funded by some of the worst puppy mills in the country.** Some of the worst large-scale puppy mills that have been cited for failing to properly care for their dogs or have even been compelled to surrender their USDA breeding licenses continue to be licensed by their states and sell directly to the public. In some cases they have even joined "animal owner alliances" or "professional" dog breeder groups designed specifically to fight legislation that would regulate puppy mills.

In Missouri, for example, in 2010 some of the largest puppy mill operators came out in vociferous opposition to Proposition B, Missouri's Puppy Mill Cruelty Prevention Act. One such person was Lois Stevens, who was forced to surrender her USDA breeder license and agreed not to apply for a new license for ten years in 1998 due to repeated, severe violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act, including filthy conditions and lack of basic care for her breeding dogs — yet she remained licensed at the state level and continued to sell dogs directly to the public. Research indicates that she continues to breed and sell dogs online and directly to the public to this day under various kennel names, including “Bone Fam” bulldogs and “Lazy S Aussies.” And in 1986, Jim and Mary Foster of Missouri (doing business as Oak Leaf Kennels) were found by the USDA to be “dealers engaged in business without a license” and were cited for improper storage of food, improper sanitation of facilities and overcrowding. In a consent decision they were ordered to cease and desist from these violations and were assessed a civil penalty. Shockingly, Mary Foster remained state-licensed for decades; in fact she co-owns one of the largest puppy mills in Missouri, Country Pets. She is also a financial supporter of MoFed PAC, an animal use group which lobbies against even the most basic animal protection measures in her state.

- **Current laws have not been effective in stopping puppy mill cruelty.** All fifty states have laws against some forms of animal cruelty. However, without laws that require commercial breeding kennels to be licensed and regularly inspected, there is no one to document, witness or report animal cruelty at these facilities. Many states' animal cruelty laws do not specifically prevent keeping a dog in a small wire cage continually for life. Most citizens want better treatment for man's best friend.
- **Puppy mill laws will not affect small hobby breeders or sportsmen.** Small hobby breeders who keep a handful of breeding dogs in their home will not generally be affected by puppy mill legislation because most puppy mill laws apply only to breeders who have more than 10 or 20 intact female breeding dogs. In addition, responsible breeders who have more than 10 or 20 intact female dogs and already provide their dogs with ample space, shelter and veterinary care will not be adversely affected because they already exceed minimum standards.