



## What's a puppy mill?

### Where pet store and Internet puppies come from

A puppy mill is also known as a “commercial dog breeding facility.” Picture hundreds to over a thousand dogs kept in cages in one place. Puppy mills exist for one reason: to make a profit by selling puppies in pet stores and on the Internet.

Some puppy mills are worse than others, but all keep more dogs than anyone would have as pets, and the dogs don't live as companion animals. They live in cages in barns and sheds, more like livestock than pets.

Because the goal is to make a profit, puppy mill owners must cut corners to boost profit. Dogs are kept in cages all the time with just the minimum legal space allowed: six inches larger than the dog on all sides. Females are bred as often as possible, and when they are no longer able to “produce” they are discarded. It is no life for man's best friend.

Though cruel and inhumane, puppy mills are legal and regulated by the federal government and some state governments as well. Government regulations, however, do not ensure a humane life for dogs; they do little more than require food, water and shelter. There are nearly 6,000 federally licensed commercial kennels in the country, and all exist to supply the nation's pet stores with a constant supply of cute puppies.

Puppy millers are different from “hobby breeders,” who have a fondness and respect for a particular breed that they want to maintain and share. There are several ways to tell them apart. Puppy mills:

- Usually have several breeds of dogs for sale, keep a lot of dogs and always have a lot of puppies,
- Often offer to ship dogs to new owners,
- Sell puppies over the Internet and in pet stores,
- Do not require an application or references from people buying a puppy,
- Usually will not allow customers to view their property or kennel,
- Don't ask buyers to return the dog or contact them if at any point the owners cannot keep the dog,
- Breed females every time they come into heat so they are always pregnant or nursing,
- Do not typically screen dogs for genetic defects (eye, joint, hip and other congenital problems that can be painful and expensive to treat, if treatment is even possible).

About 4 million dogs are bred in puppy mills each year while nearly 5 million animals are killed in shelters each year. More than 20 percent of dogs in shelters are purebred. You can choose not to support the puppy mill industry by adopting your next pet instead of going to the pet store or buying a puppy online. It's easy to find your perfect rescued puppy or dog by visiting the local shelter, or try Best Friends online at <http://adoptions.bestfriends.org>. Other adoption sites include [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com), [www.adoptapet.com](http://www.adoptapet.com) or [www.pets911.com](http://www.pets911.com).

You can also contact local breed rescue organizations by searching [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), entering a city or state, the breed you are looking for, and the word “rescue.” **\*\*A note of caution:** Breeders have caught on that more people are choosing to adopt instead of buy. If a person is “adopting out” several litters of purebred puppies, has “more on the way,” and doesn't seem to have adult animals in need as well, then proceed with caution. This may be a breeder rather than a rescue.

For more information about puppy mills and what you can do about them, go to <http://pupmills.bestfriends.org>

