

9 Ways to Honor and Celebrate Your Canine Companion

National Puppy Day Was Last Week - the time to shower your favorite canine with love and affection for all the joy and happiness she brings into your life. It's a perfect opportunity to recognize the plight of the less fortunate pups sitting in your local animal shelter and rescue organizations.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- March 23rd is National Puppy Day!
- The purpose of this special day is to honor and celebrate puppies, and remind the public of how many need to be rescued each year
- There are many ways to celebrate this day with your pup (or adult dog), such as taking him to the beach or treating him to a new toy
- If you don't yet have a canine family member or are ready to expand your pack, in the spirit of National Puppy Day, I hope you'll adopt your next furry friend from your local shelter or rescue organization

National Puppy Day was founded in 2006 by Colleen Paige, an animal behaviorist and author, and is celebrated each year on March 23rd. From the National Today website:

"... National Puppy Day is a paw-some day for all dog enthusiasts to celebrate unconditional love and fawn over the undeniably cute furballs that bring so much happiness into this world. While we're all softies when it comes to our four-legged friends, today is also designed to raise awareness about puppy mills and help prospective pet owners consider adoption.

National Puppy Day and National Dog Day are now great opportunities to adopt a dog because shelters typically have the highest intake of dogs around summertime. With 30 to 40 animals entering the shelter daily, we need public support to help save lives, and these national holidays do just that — by encouraging and reminding people to adopt, donate, and love their animals more every year."¹

Ways to Celebrate National Puppy Day

- **Adopt a puppy from your local shelter or rescue organization** — Alternatives: Volunteer at your local animal shelter and offer to walk or play with a puppy (or adult dog), clean cages or anything else they need help with. Donate blankets, food and toys to animal welfare organizations.
- **Organize a peaceful demonstration in front of your community pet store that sells factory farmed puppies** — Alternative: Write your congressman and ask that he/she support the ban of puppy mills in your state (see below for more info on how you can help eliminate puppy mills).
- **Have a National Puppy Day party and invite all your friends and their canine companions.**

- **Spend some time taking photos of your puppy.** — Alternative: Hire a professional pet photographer for a fun photo shoot, or have a portrait painted of your pup to suspend the fleeting magic of dogdom.
- **Assist an ill or elderly neighbor by walking their furry family member.**
- **Buy your pup a fun new toy (or two, or five)** — Alternative: Buy her a fashionable harness or collar and leash.
- **Give your fully immunized puppy some fun exercise by taking him to a doggy play resort** — Alternative: Take him to the beach.
- **Brush your pup to eliminate excess fur** — Alternative: Give her a massage or holistic spa treatment.
- **Teach your pup at least one new trick** — Alternative: spend a few minutes practicing the commands he knows.
- **Enroll in a nose work class** — Create DIY mental enrichment games at home.

5 Ways You Can Help Put Puppy Mills Out of Business

1. Don't buy a puppy from a pet store, since most receive their "inventory" from puppy mills, and don't purchase a puppy online from an internet seller. Remember, you don't "rescue" a puppy from a pet store; you perpetuate the breeding cycle. When people stop doing business with puppy retailers, puppy mills will go out of business.

Also avoid buying your pet supplies from businesses that sell puppies. As the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) makes clear:

*"Consumer action is a critical element in the fight against puppy mills. Convincing consumers not to shop for anything — including puppies and supplies — at stores that sell puppies is the most effective way to stop the demand for puppy mill dogs."*²



2. Don't ever make an impulse purchase of a pet. Taking on the responsibility of caring for a dependent creature isn't something you should do on a whim. It's a decision that requires careful thought, research, planning, and

preparation.

When it comes to those adorable puppies being sold at your local mall, or on craigslist, or out of the back of a truck in a grocery store parking lot, as cute as they are, and as much as you may think they need you, just say no. Don't help puppy mill and unethical backyard breeders stay in business.

3. If you have your heart set on purchasing a purebred pup, try to buy from a local, reputable breeder. Make sure to check his or her background and references. Review the sales contract closely. A reputable breeder will want to meet and interview anyone interested in buying a puppy, as well as be proud to show you the parents, their living environment and their medical records. That's why you won't find responsible breeders selling to pet stores.

Always visit a breeder's facility in person. You want to see for yourself the conditions in which your puppy was born and raised. I would also insist on meeting the parents (the mother dog, at a minimum). If the breeder won't show you the living conditions in a separate barn, building or part of the house, be suspicious.

Additional resources:

- **[How to Find a Responsible Dog Breeder](#)** (Humane Society of the United States)
 - **[Finding a Good Dog Breeder](#)** (Dogtime.com)
 - **[List of breeders who feed raw and give minimal vaccines](#)**
 - **[Dr. Becker's Prospective Breeder Questionnaire](#)** to determine the health of a breeder's puppies
4. Take action against puppy mills by supporting and recommending legislation that regulates the breeding and selling of animals in your city, county, or state. Volunteer your time or talents or donate to organizations that act as watchdogs over breeders, including the **[Animal Welfare Institute](#)**, and the **[Animal Defense Fund](#)**.

Write to your state and federal legislators to share your concerns about the reality of puppy mills. Ask them to enact legislation that ensures dogs are bred and raised in healthy environments.

Report unethical or abusive breeders or puppy mill operators in your area to your local animal law enforcement agency and follow up to see what action has been taken.

5. Adopt your next puppy or dog from a local animal shelter or rescue organization. There are millions of wonderful, deserving pets waiting for homes in the U.S. You'll feel good about your decision, and you may very well save a life.

Sources and References

¹ [National Today, National Puppy Day](#).

² [ASPCA Press Release, December 1, 2011](#)
