

Don't Get a Puppy from Here – You're Practically Guaranteed a Sick Animal

Even if it looks completely innocent, most come from unspeakably inhumane conditions — filthy beyond comprehension. And sadly, this practice is legal in every state. You're most likely to be conned if you violate rule number 2 on this list (though all five are important).

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Estimates are that several thousand puppy mills continue to operate in the U.S., producing about 2 million puppies per year
- Tragically, 2 million is also the conservative number of dogs killed in U.S. shelters each year
- You can help put pet mills out of business by never buying a puppy from a pet store or online, since the majority of these retailers get their animals from mills
- If you're determined to purchase a purebred puppy, make sure to buy from a local (preferably) and highly reputable breeder
- If you're looking to add a dog to your family, hopefully you'll check your local shelters and rescues first, and consider adopting a deserving pet

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If you're concerned about the welfare of animals, you're probably aware that puppy mills still exist in the U.S. The majority of pet mills are filthy operations in which animals are subjected to cruel treatment and inhumane living conditions.

They exist primarily to put money in the pockets of mill operators and pet store owners. According to Best Friends Animal Society:

"A puppy mill is a high-volume commercial dog-breeding operation in which profit and maximum production take priority over the health and welfare of the animals.

Puppies bred in these factory-like settings are regarded as nothing more than a cash crop commodity, and despite the poor conditions in which the breeder dogs are forced to live, puppy mills are still legal in every state."¹

According to estimates, there are approximately 10,000 puppy mills in the U.S., both licensed and unlicensed, with the majority located in the midwest. These mills produce an estimated 2 million puppies per year, which is about the number of dogs killed in U.S. shelters each year.²

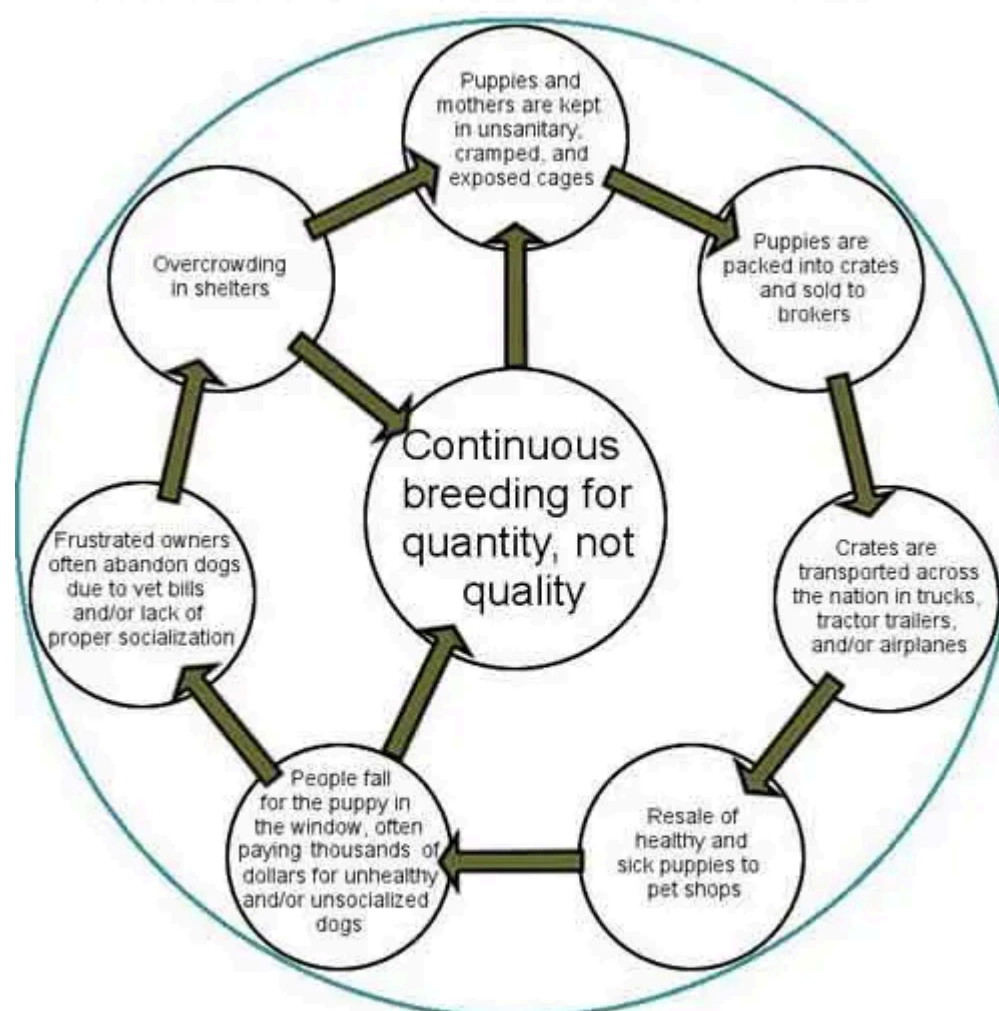
Five Ways You Can Help Put Puppy Mills Out of Business

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. When people stop doing business with puppy retailers, puppy mills will go out of business.

You don't "rescue" a puppy from a pet store, you perpetuate the breeding cycle. 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."*³

Puppy Mill Pet Shop Life Cycle



CAAPS

Companion Animal Protection Society

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 the 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. You should 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** (Natural Rearing.com)
 - Dr. Becker's 18-Point Assessment 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 insures 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.

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.

12 Great Reasons to Adopt Your Next Dog

1. Every dog not purchased from a pet store or backyard breeder improves the pet overpopulation problem created by irresponsibility and greed.
2. Adopting a dog from a no-kill shelter can free up space for older or special needs pets that may not find new homes before the end of their natural lives.
3. There are plenty of dogs to choose from at most shelters. They come in every age, shape, size, coat color and breed mix, and you can find purebreds at shelters as well. In fact, many breeds have their own rescue organizations, so if you're looking for a purebred, make sure to check both your local shelter and breed rescue organization.
4. Compared to the cost of purchasing a pet, adopting one from an animal shelter is relatively inexpensive.
5. Adopting an older dog allows you to skip over the time-consuming, often frustrating puppy stage of development.
6. Adopting a mature dog also takes the guesswork out of determining what your pet will look like as an adult — what size she'll grow to, the thickness and color of her coat and her basic temperament, for example.

7. Depending on his background, your older dog may already be housetrained and know basic obedience commands like come, sit, stay and down.
8. Most shelters and rescue organizations do assessments on every new pet taken in, to determine things like temperament, whether the dog has any aversion to other pets or people, whether he's housetrained, has had obedience training, etc. Many of these organizations also have resources to help pets with lack of training or behavioral issues. So when you adopt a pet from one of these organizations, you have a general idea what to expect from your new dog when you bring him home.
9. Many shelters and rescues also provide new owner support in the form of materials about training, common behavior problems, nutrition, basic grooming and general care. In some cases there are even free hotlines you can call for questions on behavior, training and other concerns.
10. If you have kids, and especially if the new dog will belong to a child, adopting a shelter animal can open a young person's eyes to the plight of homeless pets. It can also help him learn compassion and responsibility, as well as how wonderful it feels to provide a forever home to a pet that might otherwise live life in a cage, or be euthanized.
11. An older adoptive pet can be the perfect companion for an older person. Many middle-aged and senior dogs require less physical exertion and attention than younger animals.
12. An adopted pet can enrich your life in ways both big and small. The unconditional love and loyalty of a dog can lift depression, ease loneliness, lower blood pressure and give you a reason to get up in the morning.

There are countless benefits to sharing your life with a dog, and when you know you saved your furry companion from an unpleasant fate, it makes the bond you share that much more meaningful.

Sources and References

[PetMD April 15, 2011 \(Archived\)](#)

^{1,2} [Best Friends Save Them All August 30, 2022](#)

³ [ASPCA December 1, 2011](#)
