

# This Sad Mistake Could Mean a Lifetime of Health Problems for Your Pet

That puppy may be cute, but this sad mistake could mean a lifetime of tragedy for his health. That's the central issue of how this showdown got started. While the battle hangs in the balance compliments of these contrarians, there's much you can do to help. Details here.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- A challenge to a 3-year-old Phoenix city ordinance banning retail sales of pets has gone all the way to the Arizona legislature
- Arizona state lawmakers are attempting to take power away from individual cities to regulate pet breeding and sales within their jurisdictions
- The Arizona house and senate bills defer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to regulate pet breeding operations
- Animal welfare organizations argue that USDA standards as a measure of good breeding conditions are neither humane nor well enforced
- There are many things individual citizens can do in their own communities to help stop puppy mills and the retail sale of pets

***Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published April 29, 2016.***

In 2015, a federal court upheld a city of Phoenix, Arizona 2013 ordinance that banned the sale of dogs and cats in retail stores unless the animals came from shelters or rescues.

The ordinance is once again under challenge (more about that shortly), but last year's ruling by a federal court judge managed to shine a bright light on the number of pets sold in Maricopa County (where Phoenix is located), as well as the state of Arizona.

According to the ruling, one pet store in a Phoenix-area mall sells 500 puppies a year, which accounts for just 2.2% of the county's dog sales, and 1.2% of state sales.

That means around 23,000 dogs are being bought and sold in Maricopa County each year, and about 41,000 statewide.

The ruling also contained some Maricopa County animal shelter statistics for 2014. County shelters took in over 38,000 animals, 34,000 of which were dogs. About 11,400 dogs found new homes, another 4,200 were returned to their owners, and over 12,000 were transferred to rescue or no-kill organizations.

Even with all those placements and transfers, Maricopa County killed over 10,000 dogs. That's just one county, in one state, in one year.

## Why a US District Court Got Involved

Like Phoenix, in the past few years, dozens of cities and municipalities in the U.S. and Canada have passed ordinances banning the retail sale of pets.<sup>1</sup> These laws went unchallenged in the courts until a pet store chain in Arizona called Puppies 'N Love, which has a location in Phoenix, filed suit against the city.

Animal welfare advocates on one side, and the pet product industry on the other, were keenly interested in the outcome of the suit, since it was the first of its kind.

In fact, the pet product industry was so interested they collected \$125,000 to help Puppies 'N Love fight their legal battle against the Phoenix ordinance. Four "leading pet industry organizations" proudly announced their intentions in a press release.<sup>2</sup> Those organizations were:

- American Pet Products Association (APPA)
- Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC)
- Pet Industry Distributors Association (PIDA)
- World Pet Association (WPA)

You might want to make a mental note of these four groups. Their \$125,000 donation to Puppies 'N Love lets us know they are just fine with the existence of puppy mills as suppliers of animals to pet stores.

Fortunately, a federal court upheld the city of Phoenix ordinance last year, but sadly, that's not the end of the story.

## Pet Store Owners Take Their Case to the Arizona Legislature

Still determined to peddle their puppies, the owners of Puppies 'N Love approached the Arizona legislature for help after the federal court ruled against them last year. The legislature quickly moved to act on the pet store owners' behalf. Per the Phoenix New Times:

*"Arizona legislators are scrambling to push through a last-minute bill that would yank cities' power to regulate pet breeding.*

*State Senator Don Shooter (R-Yuma), in the third such attempt in two weeks, has slipped the highly controversial proposal into Senate Bill 1248 using a strike-everything amendment."*<sup>3</sup>

As you might guess, Arizona cities that have passed ordinances banning the retail sale of pets are not happy with this development.

According to Phoenix New Times, Tempe councilwoman Lauren Kuby, who authored a unanimously approved ordinance for her city, accused Shooter of "putting profits over puppies" by "bowing" to the whims of the pet industry without properly researching the issue.

*“We conducted a six-month study group with animal-welfare groups and people in the pet industry,” said Kuby. “We filed public-information requests to find out where Tempe pet stores were getting their puppies and what the conditions were like in the breeding facilities.*

*“Then, with overwhelming support from the public, we made a very deliberate, careful decision,” she continued. “Now, with very little deliberation and analysis, the state is going to overturn what we did in two weeks.”<sup>4</sup>*

## **Relying on the USDA to Regulate Puppy Mills Is Reckless**

At a recent Arizona Senate committee meeting, Senator Shooter ignored dozens of residents who showed up to voice concern about his bill.

*“We’re not going to take everybody’s time to listen to somebody complain about what the U.S. Department of Agriculture does,” said Shooter. “We have no jurisdiction.”<sup>5</sup>*

Ironically, Shooter’s bill relies heavily on the presumed value of USDA oversight of puppy mills — an oversight program that virtually every U.S. animal advocacy group has deemed worse than useless.

The fact is, USDA standards as a measure of good breeding conditions are neither humane nor well enforced. Here’s the USDA issue in a nutshell, as described by Delcianna Winders writing for the Arizona Daily Star:

*“The bill [AZ House Bill] references U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal Welfare Act [AWA] inspection reports, which the USDA’s own office of inspector general has repeatedly found to [be] inaccurate and incomplete.*

*The bill would prohibit the sale of dogs sourced from facilities when the citations for AWA violations noted on USDA inspection reports for those facilities meet certain criteria. But all the evidence makes clear that these inspection reports fail to accurately reflect AWA violations.*

*An inspector general’s audit found that more than 30% of inspectors failed to correctly report AWA violations by puppy mills on inspection reports.*

*Specific examples cited in the report — and illustrated with gut-wrenching photographs — include a mill at which numerous dogs were ‘infested with ticks’ and ‘[o]ne dog’s face was covered with ticks,’ and another mill where an inspector observed an ‘unsightly’ and ‘odorous’ buildup of feces in the drainage between two dog enclosures, yet failed to cite it as a violation.*

*In short, the USDA’s own inspector general’s office found that the agency has routinely failed to properly fill out the very inspection reports that the Arizona Legislature is now being asked to defer to.”<sup>6</sup>*

It's been clear for decades that the USDA's oversight of the pet breeding industry is nothing but a sick joke. If you're interested and have the stomach for it, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has uploaded 18 pages of severe violations noted at dog breeding facilities as quoted in USDA Inspection Reports at [this link](#).

## Stop Puppy Mills — Things You Can Do

Excerpted from the [Best Friends Resources](#) page:

- **Adopt your next pet** — You may have your heart set on a puppy or a particular breed, but please don't support puppy mills by buying pets online or in stores.
- **Don't buy a puppy online or from a pet store** — If you buy a puppy online or from a pet store, you are most likely supporting the puppy mill industry because these are the two ways that puppy millers sell millions of dogs each year.
- **Take action against pet stores that sell dogs supplied by puppy mills** — Ask pet stores to consider switching to a humane business model, one that promotes adopting instead of selling puppies from breeders. If the store chooses not to change, you can hold peaceful rallies to help educate the public and change store policy.
- **Support legislation that regulates and reduces breeding of animals** — To help change your city, county and state laws, sign up to receive alerts from Best Friends' Voices for No More Homeless Pets. We make it quick and easy for you to support laws in your area that fight puppy mills.
- **Become an expert on the subject** — Get familiar with how the puppy mill industry works by looking through Best Friends' resource library. You can watch breeder video footage, read USDA documents, and learn how to research pet stores in your community.
- **Know the existing laws** — Many states have laws that regulate breeders and/or retail pet sellers.
- **Ask government officials to pass stricter laws for pet stores and dog breeders** — Write or call your city, county, state and federal officials and ask them to take these issues seriously.
- **Speak out in your community** — Write letters to the editors of newspapers about puppy mills and breeders who keep their animals in unacceptable conditions. Note how many ads for dogs, puppies, kittens and other animals there are in the paper's classified section, while shelters overflow with unwanted pets.
- **Elect animal-friendly candidates** — Before any election (local, state or federal), ask candidates if they would support laws regulating commercial breeders and what they would do about puppy mills in the community.
- **Report bad puppy stores** — If you have bought a puppy from a store and the puppy is sick, read "[Bought a Sick Pet Store Puppy? What to Do.](#)"
- **Infiltrate the ads** — In your newspaper's classifieds section, you've seen the numerous ads that sell puppies. To plant the idea of adopting instead, place classified ads promoting your local shelter or breed rescue group via [Petfinder.com](#).
- **Raise awareness and/or donations** — Host an awareness-raising or fundraising event in your community. To educate the public about puppy mills and/or raise awareness and funding for local rescue groups, organize a walk, conduct a bake sale or set up a table at local events and hand out information.
- **Spread the word** — Educate your friends, family and coworkers - especially those looking to obtain a pet — about the cruelty of puppy mills and the joys of pet adoption.

- **Don't give up** — The fight against puppy mills and bad breeders has been going on for decades. Things won't change overnight, but we are making progress and each little change helps. If you educate just one person about the horrors of puppy mills or convince just one person to adopt rather than buy a pet, you've made a difference.

## Sources and References

[Phoenix Business Journal, July 31, 2015](#)

<sup>1</sup> [Best Friends, Jurisdictions With Humane Pet Sales Laws](#)

<sup>2</sup> [APPA Press Release, May 5, 2014 \(Archived\)](#)

<sup>3,4,5</sup> [Phoenix New Times, March 28, 2016](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Tucson.com, March 28, 2016 \(Archived\)](#)

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