

### What is a retail pet sale ban?

A retail pet sale ban prohibits the for-profit sale of dogs and cats in stores. Pet stores continue to sell pet supplies and food. A retail pet sale ban is not a ban on pet stores, it just ends the for-profit sale of puppy mill dogs. The majority of most pet stores' business is unaffected. Some pet stores even shift to offering adoptable animals in partnership with rescue groups or shelters. Across the country, the trend in pet stores is to transition to this humane model anyways. Most pet store owners realize that following a humane business model is attractive to potential customers.

### What is a puppy mill?

A puppy mill is a commercial breeding operation that places more importance on profit than animals' health. Some mills warehouse over 1000 breeding dogs in order to produce high numbers of puppies. Dogs in puppy mills are kept in deplorable, unsanitary conditions. Oftentimes, dogs are put in stacked wire cages with no access to the ground or sunshine. Female dogs are bred constantly without rest between litters and without concern for their health and safety. Dogs receive no positive human contact. It is estimated that over 10,000 puppy mills exist in the United States. These mills produce millions of puppies annually while most municipal shelters struggle to manage the existing population of healthy, adoptable dogs.

### We don't have puppy mills here. Why do we need a retail pet sale ban?

Almost all pet stores that sell puppies (close to 100%) are supplied by puppy mills.<sup>1</sup> If pet stores stopped selling these dogs, demand would decrease and fewer puppy mills would exist. While some states have more puppy mills than others (specifically Missouri and Pennsylvania), any city with a pet store that sells puppies, from California to New York, worsens the problem. Puppy mills are a national problem with negative impacts on your local government and economy.

### Shouldn't the focus be on puppy mill owners instead of honest business owners?

Compassionate people are working to end both supply and demand of puppy mill dogs through public awareness campaigns, pushing for stricter laws, and transitioning pet stores to offering animals for adoption. Retail pet sale bans are just one part of the solution.

It's also a consumer protection issue. Many pet stores advertise that their puppies are from "small, family breeders" when, in reality, puppies sold in pet stores come from puppy mills. This type of consumer fraud has become so common that some state legislatures have passed "puppy lemon laws" to protect consumers against such claims.

These consumer laws became necessary because so many people have purchased sick and diseased animals. Puppy mill animals often suffer from painful and deadly veterinary problems and illnesses. Poor sanitation, lack of veterinary care, and overcrowding result in disease. Excessive inbreeding results in puppies with dangerous genetic defects. The wire cages that the dogs are forced to stand on combined with unsafe levels of ammonia from waste also result in injuries and health problems. Even minor injuries and illnesses can become severe because animals are not given veterinary care. Puppies from puppy mills frequently become sick, and some even die, after they are purchased by unsuspecting families.

In New Jersey, the attorney general filed a lawsuit in August, 2016 against Just Pups LLC and its owner, Vincent LoSacco, for duping customers. Commenting on the case, the attorney general stated "Vincent LoSacco's alleged deceptive behavior caused his customers to suffer financially and emotionally as they sought expensive veterinary care for the sick puppies he sold them. This kind of consumer fraud has a devastating effect on pet lovers and will not be tolerated in our state."<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the owners of Just Pups LLC were charged with 134 counts of animal cruelty.<sup>3</sup>

### Aren't puppy mills already illegal?

No, many puppy mills actually operate legally. The standards of care required in breeding operations is so low that puppy mill owners can legally warehouse dogs in tiny cages as long as food and water are provided. A federal law, the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), sets the minimum standards for breeding dogs and cats.<sup>4</sup>

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### **Aren't puppy mills already illegal? (*cont.*)**

Puppy mills are overseen by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The AWA requires that the USDA license and inspect puppy mills.

But the USDA consistently fails to effectively regulate puppy mills. Licensed breeders are routinely cited for multiple violations of the AWA without consequence (no fines or suspension of license).

### **If the breeder has a United States Department of Agriculture license, is he reputable?**

No. The law requires only the most minimal care so even a fully licensed breeder can raise puppies in horrifying conditions. For example, if the operator provides food, water, and shelter, it will probably pass a USDA inspection. There is little difference between a licensed and unlicensed commercial breeder. And even if a puppy mill operator fails an inspection, the mill will likely be allowed to continue operating.

Additionally, the USDA does not employ enough inspectors to realistically investigate or even inspect every puppy mill. There are thousands of puppy mills across the country. It's simply not possible for a small team to monitor all of them.

### **Does these bans affect family breeders?**

No, retail pet sale bans only impact pet stores. Private breeders are not affected by these laws. Furthermore, family breeders rarely sell to pet stores.

### **Can I still buy a puppy in a city with a retail pet sale ban?**

Yes. Family breeders can continue to operate and people are free to purchase their dogs.

But it's worth noting that puppies are readily available for adoption at most shelters. And with the internet, it's easy to find rescue groups in your city that have puppies available for adoption. Furthermore, shelter dogs are just as healthy and well-behaved (or mischievous!) as any other dog. (*continued page 4*)



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### Can I still buy a puppy in a city with a retail pet sale ban? *(cont.)*

If anything, it's dogs from pet stores who are likely to have medical and behavioral problems. Studies looking at dogs produced at commercial breeding operations determined that commercial breeding had long-term damaging effects on dogs.<sup>6</sup> The studies found that adult dogs who were purchased as puppies from pet stores received low behavioral scores.<sup>5</sup> Dogs from pet stores were more aggressive, more anxious, and less comfortable with new people.

### Which cities have retail pet sale bans?

Many cities and counties have enacted retail pet sale bans and that number grows every day. Best Friends Animal Society has an online database of jurisdictions with retail pet sale bans: <http://bestfriends.org/resources/jurisdictions-retail-pet-sale-bans>. Recent notable cities to ban the sale of puppies in pet stores are Boston, Portland, ME, and Key West, FL.<sup>7</sup>

### Why would anyone oppose a retail pet sale ban?

Some pet industry groups and kennel clubs continue to lobby against retail pet sale bans. This is partially because such groups represent the interests of puppy mill operators and in part because fewer puppy mills in operation means less money in registration fees. The American Kennel Club profits immensely from puppy mills because in order for puppy mill operators to state that their dogs are "AKC registered," each individual animal must be registered for a fee. As recently as 2010, "roughly 40 percent of the AKC's \$61 million in annual revenue came from fees related to registration."<sup>8</sup>

For the AKC, profits are more important than the well-being of the dogs. For example, a malamute breeder in Montana was arrested for 91 counts of animal cruelty after over a hundred dogs were found in horrific conditions. Many dogs were severely ill, others were dead and stacked in piles, and several malamutes were surviving by eating their own feces.<sup>9</sup> At the time of the charges, he had passed not one, but two AKC, inspections.



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### How can I pass a retail pet sale ban in my community?

Speak with your local legislator! Private citizens cannot propose laws. But you can ask your city or county representative to propose a law banning the sale of dogs and cats at pet stores. Come prepared with statistics and facts (like the ones we've provided for you) to make your case. And, remember, always be respectful and polite.

### The Fine Print (sources)

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Retail pet sale bans protect consumers and dogs. Let's end puppy mills forever!



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