



# THE CRUEL REALITY OF THE PUPPY MILL PIPELINE



## Michigan Pet Stores

- **Hundreds of puppies** were imported by Michigan pet stores from Midwest puppy mill breeders and brokers since 2021, according to public records.\*
- **Unlicensed breeders:** MI pet stores also appear to have sourced from some unlicensed breeders.
- **Brokers:** Many of the puppies were purchased from massive Indiana, Minnesota and Ohio-based brokers (middlemen dealers), rather than directly from breeders, limiting publicly available breeder information.
- **Lack of oversight:** Neither federal nor state authorities adequately regulate commercial breeders. See [USDA fact sheet](#) for more details.
- The photos below depict just a sampling of the puppy mill cruelty Michigan pet stores support.

\* This document is based on health certificates that are only required for interstate transfers/puppy imports and thus does not include in-state purchases/puppies purchased from MI breeders or brokers by MI pet stores.

### **Terry Cozart (Neelyville, MO)**

**PURCHASED BY:** Petland (Novi) and Westland Dog Food Company (Westland)





**William Knepp (Washington, IN)**

**PURCHASED BY:** Petland (Novi)

In 2022, USDA inspectors noted:

- Expired medications, an open bottle of medication with flies on it, and loose pills on a table.
- A dog with **swelling under the jaw roughly the size of a golf ball**, reddened skin, and scabs on the chest.
- A buildup of waste under some enclosures.

In 2021, USDA inspectors noted:

- Some enclosures had a buildup of **dirt, grime, and feces**.



Enclosures with a build up of **dirt, grime and feces**.  
/ USDA, 2021



**David J Graber (Odon, IN)**

**PURCHASED BY:** The Barking Boutique (West Michigan store) and Petland (Novi); Petland bought puppies from this breeder multiple times from 2020-2022 despite this terrible violation.



Golden retriever with two deep, open wounds down to the muscle tissue that **had not been treated** by a veterinarian. / USDA, 2019

**John, Marie and Lewis Graber/JMG Puppies (Grabill, IN)**

**PURCHASED BY:** The Barking Boutique (West Michigan store)



A dog with noticeable skin issues that had **not been taken to a veterinarian** for treatment. / USDA, 2020



**Charles Feldmann/Pleasant Run Kennel (Sheldon, MO)**

**PURCHASED BY:** Westland Dog Food Company (Westland)

In 2021, USDA noted **252 dogs** on the property.



A dog with **dried feces matted into fur** on her legs and back end and filthy conditions. / *USDA, 2016*



Roadside picture. / *HSUS, 2021*



**Vernon & Sara Bontrager/Grand Valley Kennels (Markesan, WI)**

**PURCHASED BY:** The Barking Boutique (Grandville\*)

In 2022, USDA noted **107 dogs** on the property.

In September 2021, USDA inspectors found:

- A dog with **"three large lacerations"** that had not been treated by a veterinarian. The licensee stated that she may have been attacked, but that he only put some ointment on it and moved her to another enclosure.

In December 2021, state inspectors found:

- A female dog that appeared dirty and frightened. She had whelped a litter within the last day and the other dogs in the enclosure **attacked and killed all puppies** in the litter.



A dog with **"three large lacerations"** that had not been treated by a veterinarian.  
/ USDA, 2021



**Harvey Burkholder/H&A Kennels (Shiloh, OH)**  
**PURCHASED BY:** Downtown Hound (Monroe)



Moldy feces under enclosures. / USDA, 2021

**Chris Kauffman (Moulton, IA)**

**PURCHASED BY:** The Barking Boutique (West Michigan store)



An enclosure with an excessive buildup of feces and a dog seemingly trying to avoid contact with feces. / USDA, 2017



A dog with a serious eye condition; eye was cloudy and blue with a mass of dark red material in the center. / USDA, 2017



**John Bontrager Jr (Dalton, WI)**

**PURCHASED BY:** The Barking Boutique (Grandville\*)

In 2022, USDA noted **103 dogs** on the property.



Received an official warning from the state in 2018 due to **matted dogs and unsanitary conditions, including excessive feces** that had not been cleaned in a week. / Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, 2018

**Jonathan Detweiler/Shady Oak Frenchies (Princeton, MO)**

**PURCHASED BY:** The Barking Boutique (Grandville\*)

In 2021, state inspectors found excessive rust in enclosures.

In 2020, state inspectors found **a female dog limping that hadn't been seen by a vet.**

**Floyd Borntager/Kuntry Lane Kennel (Salem, IN)**

**PURCHASED BY:** Puppygram (Detroit/Berkley) and The Barking Boutique (Grand Rapids)

In 2021, USDA inspectors learned that a dog had escaped from her enclosure several months prior and was unable to be recaptured. This **dog was later hit by a vehicle and died** due to her injuries. Additionally, Borntager was also found re-selling puppies from other breeders to a pet store without a broker license. In 2023, USDA inspectors learned that 2 more dogs had disappeared from the facility months prior and were never located.

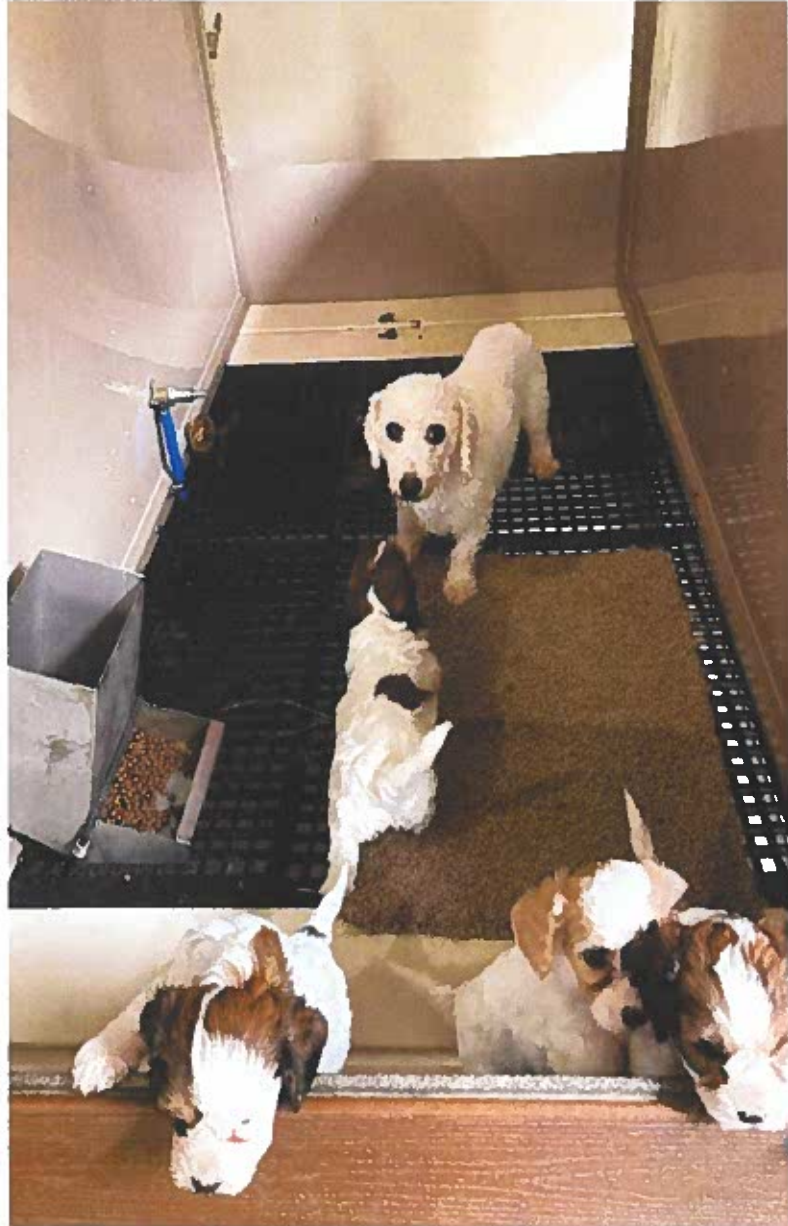


**David H Miller (Stone Creek, OH)**

**PURCHASED BY:** Petland (Novi)

In 2022, state inspectors found numerous violations, including inadequate or no solid floor space in enclosures.

In 2020, state inspectors found a dog favoring her hind legs and an enclosure with wire flooring that did not "preserve the dog's normal mobility and muscle tone."



Enclosures lacking adequate solid floor space for dogs and puppies. / *Ohio Dept. of Agriculture, 2022*



## Dan R Erb (Baltic, OH)

**PURCHASED BY:** Petland Novi

In 2022, state inspectors found two dogs without daily access to the outdoors.

In 2020, state inspectors found some enclosures that lacked adequate interior height.



One enclosure that lacked adequate interior height for a dog. / Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, 2020

## Raymond Schlabach/Dreamy Puppy LLC (Campbell Hill, IL)

**PURCHASED BY:** The Barking Boutique (Grandville\*)

In March 2023, USDA inspectors found:

- A pug with **puncture wounds and a large swelling that had a hard mass in it**; the licensee claimed they had given the dog a shot of penicillin, but the inspector noted that the dog had signs of an abscess and should have been diagnosed and treated by a veterinarian.
- Several dogs with red, inflamed or scabby ears.



**Samuel Beiler (Platteville, WI)**

**PURCHASED BY:** The Barking Boutique (Grandville\*)

In 2022, USDA inspectors found:

- An accumulation of feces in outdoor enclosures.

In 2018, state inspectors found:

- Two dogs with matting and/or **fecal matter attached to their coats** (pictured).
- An accumulation of feces in both indoor and outdoor enclosures.
- Three small-breed dogs who had escaped from their outdoor enclosure.

In 2017, USDA inspectors found:

- Two poodles had signs of **advanced dental disease and one had "tooth roots visible"**.
- Three mice were seen in the food and bedding storage.
- Dogs passing under a divider into neighboring enclosures, some with puppies.



*Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, 2018*

**Mike & Sharon West/Hillside Kennels (Unionville, IA)**

**PURCHASED BY:** Petland (Novi)



Roadside pictures. / HSUS, 2023



### **Additional Petland Novi sourcing information:**

- Petland Novi buys hundreds of puppies each year from massive brokers based in Ohio, Indiana and Minnesota who resell puppies from puppy mills across the Midwest. *In 2021 alone, the store bought **more than 600 puppies** from large brokers.*
- Buying from brokers, rather than directly from breeders, keeps breeder information out of the public domain and greatly increases the likelihood of disease transmission among weeks old puppies who are confined in cramped, unsanitary conditions with puppies from many different mills.

*\*The Barking Boutique Grandville location reportedly closed in 2022, but two stores remain open in Michigan.*

## **Questions?**

**Contact** the HSUS Michigan State Director: [michigan@humanesociety.org](mailto:michigan@humanesociety.org)

**For public records** this document is based on, see <https://airtable.com/shrP3WyWyRJF2x1ih>



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**





**COALITION OF HUMANE PET STORES**  
**IN SUPPORT OF MICHIGAN'S PUPPY PROTECTION BILL**  
**(HB 4838)**



**60 Humane Pet Stores**

- Beowolf Provisions for Pets - Kalamazoo, MI
- Celebrity Pets Co. - Northville, MI
- Chap's Feed Store - Livonia, MI
- Chris's Pet Store - Madison Heights, MI
- Detroit K9 Pet Supply - Detroit, MI (Warren Ave.)
- Detroit K9 Pet Supply - Detroit, MI (Livernois Ave.)
- Discount Pet & Supplies - Livonia, MI
- Discount Variety - Harrison, MI
- Doodle Doo Bakery - Birch Run, MI
- Doogie's Supercenter - Davison, MI
- Feed Rite Pet Supply - Lincoln Park, MI
- Flushing Lawn and Garden - Flushing, MI
- Gib's Super City - Ewart, MI
- Healthy Dogma - Oxford, MI
- Incredipets Market - Waterford Twp, MI
- K-9 Specialties - Warren, MI
- Little Monsters Bird Toys - Cadillac, MI
- Marketplace Pet Supplies - Clarkston, MI

Must Love Dogs Boutique & Spa - Grand Haven, MI  
Packy's Pet Supplies - Houghton Lake, MI  
Paw Boutique Pet Shop - Franklin, MI  
Pet Connection - Livonia, MI  
Pet Pantry - Harbor Springs, MI  
Pet Supplies Plus - Bay City, MI  
Pet Supplies Plus - Chesterfield Twp, MI  
Pet Supplies Plus - Dearborn, MI  
Pet Supplies Plus - Fenton, MI  
Pet Supplies Plus - Kalamazoo, MI  
Pet Supplies Plus - Livonia, MI  
Pet Supplies Plus - Southgate, MI  
Pet Supplies Plus - Taylor, MI  
Pet Supplies Plus - Woodhaven, MI  
Pets and Things - Shelby Twp, MI  
Pets Naturally - Traverse City, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Beverly Hills, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Brighton, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Canton, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Detroit, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Livonia, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Northville, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Novi, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Riverview, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Rochester Hills, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Shelby Twp, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Troy, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - West Bloomfield, MI  
Premier Pet Supply - Westland, MI  
Rocko's Pet Stop - Macomb, MI  
Ruff Life Pet Outfitters - Petoskey, MI  
Scalzes and Tails - Traverse City, MI  
Something Fishy - Westland, MI  
Specialty Pet Supplies - Plymouth, MI  
The Bird House - Muskegon, MI  
The Urban Dog - Rochester Hills, MI  
The Wild Indoors Pet Supplies - Pinckney, MI  
Val's Pet Supplies - Clawson, MI  
Wags to Wiskers - Ann Arbor, MI  
Wags to Wiskers - Ludington, MI  
Wags to Wiskers - Saline, MI  
Wags to Wiskers - Tecumseh, MI





# Predatory Loans for Puppies Must be Stopped, Say Consumer and Animal Welfare Advocates

February 14, 2022 — Press Release

February 14, 2022

*TAB Bank is helping EasyPay Finance evade state laws that prohibit 189% APR loans*

WASHINGTON – In advance of National Love Your Pet Day on February 20, the Stop the Debt Trap coalition is teaming up with animal welfare advocates to launch a campaign to stop TAB Bank from making predatory puppy loans, many of which go to buy puppies from puppy mills. At pet stores across the country, Transportation Alliance Bank (TAB Bank) is helping predatory lender EasyPay Finance evade state interest rate laws and make pet loans at 130% to 189% APR (annual percentage rate) – **rates that are illegal in most states for EasyPay and other lenders that are not banks**. Consumer and animal welfare advocates are calling for TAB Bank to stop helping EasyPay gouge consumers with these loans and for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to stop TAB Bank from facilitating this usury. The campaign includes:

- A new report describing how TAB Bank helps EasyPay make predatory puppy loans;
- A February 15 rally with the Utah Humane Society at the statehouse in Salt Lake City to spotlight TAB Bank's role in financing predatory puppy loans;
- A February 17 social media storm – using #PredatoryPuppyLoans, #PredatoryTABbank and #LoveYourPetDay;
- An effort to collect stories from people impacted by predatory puppy loans;
- A focus on how predatory financing promotes the sale of puppy mill dogs;
- A petition to urge the FDIC to stop TAB Bank and other banks from helping nonbank lenders disguise their loans as bank loans that are exempt from state interest rate limits;
- Work to broaden support for the Veterans and Consumers Fair Credit Act, which would set a national 36% interest rate cap;
- And more to come ...

EasyPay offers financing for purchases at pet stores, auto mechanics, furniture stores and other retailers at rates ranging from 130% to 189% APR. In 32 states where those rates are illegal, EasyPay launders its loans through TAB Bank, headquartered in Utah, to disguise the loans as bank loans that are exempt from state rate caps. This is a practice often referred to as a "rent-a-bank" scheme. In states that allow these high rates, EasyPay extends financing directly. To see which stores offer EasyPay loans, go to <https://findastore.easypayfinance.com/>.

Hundreds of consumers have submitted complaints about EasyPay (owned by the company Duvera Billing Services) to the [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau \(CFPB\)](#), [Better Business Bureau](#), and [Ripoff Report](#). They describe: sky-high interest rates with payments that go mostly to interest; high rates even for military servicemembers; deceptive interest-free promotions; debt collectors hounding people for money; and credit reporting abuses. For example:

- A New Jersey consumer went into a pet store “in hopes of purchasing a cocker spaniel....I found that I am being charged 151.97 % which is five times the legal limit of 30 % that can be charged in New Jersey.”
- A military consumer in Florida described “the egregious interest rate” of 130% APR for a dog.
- Another person complained that a pet store would not take back a dog who was sick and eventually died: “I had no choice [but] to continue to pay them [so] as not to ruin my credit history, all while trying to save a dog paying thousands [of] dollars in veterinarian bills.... It tore my family apart losing the dog. My children were especially devastated.... I only borrowed [\$2200.00] and it is reporting I owe [\$5500.00] on my credit report due to interest.”

These and other stories are described in a new report on [Predatory Puppy Loans by TAB Bank and EasyPay Finance](#).

“TAB Bank is misusing its bank charter by fronting for abusive loans that bleed consumers dry,” **said Nadine Chabrier, policy and litigation counsel at the Center for Responsible Lending**. “Responsible merchants should stop peddling predatory EasyPay loans and the FDIC should end TAB Bank’s participation in this scheme.”

“Pushing financed purchases is just another way puppy mills and their pet store sales outlets get away with selling puppies for thousands of dollars to unsuspecting consumers, many of whom end up with extremely high interest rates and hidden fees they frequently cannot afford,” **said John Goodwin, senior director of the Stop Puppy Mills campaign for the Humane Society of the United States**. “Some pet stores have reported that 80% of the puppies they sell are financed, indicating that these predatory loans are a key part of the puppy mill to pet store pipeline.”

“TAB Bank’s partnership with EasyPay Finance promotes exploitative financing of puppies from inhumane, high-volume dog breeding facilities that ignore the needs of the puppies, including proper veterinary care and early socialization,” **said Rachel Heatley, Advocacy Director of the Utah Humane Society**.

“The harmful ‘rent-a-bark’ model is being used by predatory payday and installment lenders to make triple-digit interest rate loans to those looking to bring puppies and other pets home. TAB Bank must be stopped from fronting for these loans that are illegal across the country,” **said Rachel Gittleman, financial services outreach manager at Consumer Federation of America**.

“The FDIC must break up the romance between TAB Bank and EasyPay Finance,” **said Lauren Saunders, associate director of the National Consumer Law Center**. “TAB Bank and EasyPay’s rent-a-bank relationship enables 189% puppy loans of questionable legality – well in excess of many state interest rate caps – dramatically increasing the cost of a family pet.”

“The FDIC should be a watchdog that pursues banks, like TAB Bank, that are using rent-a-bank schemes. Under previous leadership, the agency didn’t even bark, let alone bite. We are hopeful new leadership will stop these predatory puppy loans that trap people in endless debt,” **said Candace Archer at Americans for Financial Reform**.

“The FDIC needs to install a fence between TAB Bank – or any bank – and predatory puppy lenders,” **said Adam Rust, Senior Policy Advisor, National Community Reinvestment Coalition**. “With new leadership at the FDIC, it’s time to close down these loopholes.”

“It’s time for the FDIC to put a leash on predatory puppy loans from TAB Bank, which is having a ball at the expense of consumers and their furry friends,” **said Mike Litt, U.S. PIRG’s consumer campaign director**.

“I’m a dog dad. My dogs are my family,” **said Brent Adams, Senior Vice President of Woodstock Institute**. “TAB Bank and EasyPay know the love of an animal will push many people into one of their predatory loans. This is financial exploitation of the worst kind.”



"A triple digit interest loan is no less predatory when it's laundered through a bank. TAB Bank is only making a bad situation worse by facilitating high-cost loans that promote the use of abusive puppy mills," said **Jeremy Funk, rescue dog owner and spokesman for Accountable.US**. "Federal regulators should crack down on this crossover of exploitative behavior that is hurting consumers and animals alike."

Earlier this month, more than a dozen advocacy organizations called for the new leadership at the FDIC to stop banks from fronting for predatory lenders through these schemes.

### **Background on puppy mills**

According to the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), a puppy mill is an inhumane, high-volume dog breeding facility that churns out puppies for profit, ignoring the needs of the pups and their parents. Puppies from mills are often sick and unsocialized. Breeding dogs are often confined to small, filthy cages for their entire lives, bred repeatedly until their bodies wear out. Puppy mills keep this cruelty hidden by selling through third parties like pet stores. Pet stores often push lending options on their customers with false promises of low interest rates only to hand them over to third party lenders like EasyPay. The HSUS recommends that those looking to add a new pet to their family avoid pet stores and instead adopt from a shelter or rescue or seek out a responsible breeder that only sells directly to the public.

**For more information, including B-roll of puppy mills or pet stores, or to interview an HSUS representative, please contact Kirsten Peek at [kpeek@humanesociety.org](mailto:kpeek@humanesociety.org).**

<https://www.nclc.org/predatory-loans-for-puppies-must-be-stopped-say-consumer-and-animal-welfare-advocates/>

**13** ON YOUR  
abc SIDE

# Humane Society reveals Michigan pet stores selling sick puppies, sourcing from puppy mills with undercover footage

During the Humane Society's time working undercover they documented improper care, sick puppies and dangerous conditions using a hidden camera.



Published: 11:26 PM EST November 16, 2023

NOVI, Mich. — An undercover investigation by the Human Society has revealed operators of a Michigan pet store have been selling sick puppies and are getting them from puppy mills.

An investigator working undercover as a kennel attendant for the Humane Society of the United States worked 40 shifts at the "Petland" store in Novi.

During their time working at Petland, they documented improper care, sick puppies and dangerous conditions using a hidden camera.

The worker said they witnessed puppies being delivered in crates stacked in unmarked vans from out of state. The puppies often fell out of the stacked cages getting hurt and arrived with obvious abdominal wounds.

Puppies with bloody feces were then made available for people to adopt. Some puppies suffered from wounds, congenital defects, vomiting and other health issues.

According to the research, transportation documents showed the Petland store had gotten puppies from "problematic puppy mills."

Five of the mills they sourced puppies from were included in the Humane Society United States' 'Horrible Hundred' report due to state and federal inspection records documenting "egregious or repeated animal care violations."



Blake Goodman, the Michigan state director for the Humane Society of the United States, said Petland has been investigated on a number of occasions, including investigations at the location in Novi.

He said the location is supposedly under new management and new ownership so they were hoping to find better conditions, but unfortunately, that wasn't the case.

"What we found was ultimately quite distressing in terms of animal welfare, protection and care," Goodman said.

The Humane Society's research has linked 11 other pet stores in Michigan to known puppy mills through the same transportation documents.

Researchers found that pet stores in Michigan were sourcing puppies from over 160 different out-of-state commercial breeders, which are also known as puppy mills.

Blake Goodman, the Michigan state director for the Humane Society of the United States, said this information only furthers the point that puppies should not be sold in retail pet stores.

He encourages everyone not to buy a puppy from a pet store this holiday season, but instead to visit a local shelter or a responsible breeder.

<https://www.wzzm13.com/article/news/investigations/michigan-pet-stores-selling-sick-puppies-sourcing-from-puppy-mills/69-f96ec6d5-1400-4d4a-a9a1-55e7a573571c>



## Humane Society of the United States reveal findings of undercover investigation into Petland in Novi



By: [Tiarra Braddock](#) , [Johnny Sartin](#)

Posted at 8:13 PM, Nov 18, 2023 and last updated 10:25 PM, Nov 18, 2023

NOVI, Mich. (WXYZ) — The Petland store inside Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi is at the center of a recent undercover operation by the Humane Society of the United States.

Officials with the organization say what they discovered was disturbing and what they saw was captured on camera.

“We have consistently connected Petland to puppy mills and so we wanted to go behind the scenes with hidden camera and see if the problems were as pervasive in the Novi store as they are in other pet land stores and the answer was yes,” said John Goodwin with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Goodwin is the senior director of the Stop Puppy Mills campaign for HSUS. An Investigator from the Humane Society worked at Petland Novi as a kennel attendant for about two months.

“We found bloody diarrhea,” said Goodwin. “We found incisions from surgeries that were not properly closed. We found all sorts of disease problems.”

The undercover video not only showed sick puppies but also caught a delivery of the puppies to Petland Novi. HSUS claims they have paperwork that shows puppies were delivered to store from mass breeding operations or puppy mills that are based in Iowa and Missouri. The organization further claims those puppy mills have a history of animal care violations.

Petland sent 7 Action News a statement about the allegations.



*“Like clockwork, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) kicked off its annual fundraising season with false allegations from an undercover HSUS operative against a family-owned and operated pet store. Each year, HSUS, which does not operate a single pet shelter, nor provide any support to 98-percent of U.S. humane societies and shelters (Center for the Environment and Welfare report, “Struggling Shelters,” Nov. 2023) publicizes its false allegations against a lawfully owned and operated pet store to get media attention and solicit donations. This summer, an undercover operative posed as an employee at Petland, Novi (MI) and made patently false claims to undermine the store’s operations and integrity. This deceitful undercover HSUS operative also failed to provide any quantitative data in her “investigation.” “Petland has a strict ‘If you see something, say something’ policy that requires employees who witness or experience something that makes them feel uncomfortable to report it via an anonymous 800- number,” said Petland VP of Animal Welfare Brian Winslow. “Instead, the undercover employee and HSUS sources withheld the information and imagery she sourced in this plot for months. Not only did they not report their concerns via the tip line, they also chose not to contact store management, animal control, nor local or state officials. She and her HSUS counterparts remained silent; reinforcing the fact that none of the pets were in danger, and they were being cared for properly. Instead, these accounts were produced into a deceiving video clip and rhetoric to launch HSUS’s 2023 Holiday fundraising season.” The operative recorded video of a French Bulldog with “cherry eye,” a very common condition for the breed and exploited the dog on social media to solicit donations on behalf of HSUS. The truth is the puppy was immediately cared for through a corrective procedure performed by a state-licensed veterinarian and has fully recovered. Additionally, the HSUS campaign material includes a kennel photo with a false caption that claims “at least one puppy ...fell and broke a leg.” According to the store owner and records, in the store’s 20+ years of operation a puppy has never broken a leg by falling from a kennel. Unfounded, false allegations of sick puppies are scattered through this HSUS campaign. “The health and well-being of our pets is Petland’s number one priority,” added Winslow. “Petland abides by all local, state, and federal regulations when it comes to the care of its pets. Our highly qualified state- licensed consulting veterinarians check puppies weekly and more frequently if required. All care is documented for each pet.” Additionally, pets undergoing treatment for any illness are not available to our guests until they have been cleared by the veterinarian. Finally, the undercover operative provided HSUS with video of a distributor acting in an unprofessional manner. Several weeks prior to this report, Petland Novi owners terminated the transport company for its unprofessional demeanor.*

*“The camera tells the truth,” Goodwin said. “What we show in the video that we acquired is exactly what was happening behind these stores.”*

If you bought a sick puppy from any Michigan pet store, Goodwin says he wants you to get in touch with the Humane Society of the United States right away. You can call them at 202-452-1100 or 866-720-2676.

# SUPPORT HB 4838

## MICHIGAN'S PUPPY PROTECTION BILL



**HB 4838 will phase out the sale of puppies, kittens, and rabbits in pet stores by July 2025.** By prohibiting pet stores from selling dogs, cats and rabbits while allowing them to partner with shelters and rescues to host adoption events and sell products and services, this bill will protect animals and consumers and promote humane businesses.

- 7 states and over 490 localities, including 10 in Michigan (Eastpointe, Fraser, New Baltimore, Royal Oak, Harbor Springs, St. Clair Shores, Ann Arbor, Woodhaven, Berkley & Ferndale) prohibit the sale of dogs and cats in pet stores.
- These laws have shrunk demand for puppies bred in cruel conditions, with public records showing that **32,000 fewer breeding dogs are now caged in USDA-licensed puppy mills** than 10 years ago.

### THE PROBLEM WITH PUPPY-SELLING PET STORES

Puppy-selling pet stores pose numerous, unique issues for animals and consumers, including:

- **Puppy mills:** [Public records](#) show that Michigan pet stores source puppies from puppy mills with terrible animal welfare records. Neither [federal](#) nor state law requires humane treatment of breeding dogs.
- **The Pipeline:** Pet store puppies are born into cruel and unsanitary conditions, taken from their mothers at just 7-8 weeks old, crammed into cages and trucked across the country in close proximity to other stressed and sick puppies and then placed in pet store cages to be handled by inexperienced staff and consumers.
- **Misleading sales tactics:** Pet stores sell puppies for thousands of dollars with false promises of humane, regulated breeders and healthy, socialized puppies when this is rarely true.
- **Sick puppies:** The HSUS, government agencies, veterinarians, and online platforms receive a constant stream of complaints from consumers who ended up with sick pet store puppies, high veterinary bills, and sometimes the heartache of their new pet dying.
- **Zoonotic disease:** The American Medical Association and the CDC have warned of the health risks posed by pet store puppies, noting that antibiotic-resistant infections continue to cause illness to people.
- **Predatory lending:** Pet stores often push financing options on customers with promises of low or no interest rates, but consumers have ended up with interest rates as high as 198%.

### THE HUMANE ALTERNATIVE

HB 4838 would drive the market towards pet sources that are better for animals and families and pet stores that do not sell puppies, but rather offer pet owners all the products and services they need.

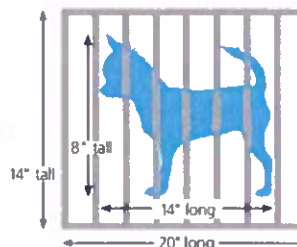
- Residents will be able to obtain the pet of their choice by adopting from a local shelter or rescue or seeking out a responsible breeder who sells directly to the public.
- The massive retail pet industry (\$147 billion and counting) is dominated by the sale of pet products and services, indicating stores can remain profitable without selling puppies.



# USDA'S BETRAYAL OF DOGS

## A USDA-licensed facility may legally:

- ✓ Confine dogs in cages only 6 inches larger than their bodies
- ✓ Keep hundreds of dogs in stack or elevated cages
- ✓ Provide only wire flooring
- ✓ Expose dogs to frigid or sweltering temperatures for hours
- ✓ Breed dogs repeatedly and excessively, without limits
- ✓ Deny hands on veterinary care to sick or injured dogs
- ✓ Kill dogs they no longer want



**A USDA license does not indicate a facility is humane, as standards of care are minimal, and enforcement is lacking.** In 2010, the Office of Inspector General reported that enforcement was ineffective against problem dealers. In 2021, the Inspector General [reported](#) that not much has changed as “[the USDA] is not able to ensure the overall health and humane treatment of animals at [dog breeding] facilities.”

- In 2021, after 4 years of no significant enforcement actions against commercial breeders and not a single license revoked, USDA revoked a license, but only after “[shocking cruelty](#)” was allowed to occur for months and over 120 animal welfare citations were issued.
- In 2023, a [terrible Iowa puppy mill](#) was shut down by county prosecutors after the breeder pled guilty to felony animal neglect. Yet, USDA allowed this breeder operate year after year with mere slaps on the wrist, even after he appeared in the annual HSUS Horrible Hundred report [six times](#) for a long list of egregious animal welfare violations that include cruelly killing dogs and leaving them to die in their cages.

## THESE PUPPY MILLS REMAIN LICENSED YEAR AFTER YEAR AND CONTINUE SELLING TO PET STORES:



USDA # 48-A-2152



USDA # 43-A-5385



USDA # 43-A-5986

## USDA'S PRIORITIES ARE CLEAR: PROMOTE AND PROTECT PUPPY MILLS

- **2024 Horrible Hundred:** Our annual [Horrible Hundred Report](#) documents instances of breeders with numerous and egregious violations spanning years who remain licensed and breeders who had been cited by state officials for numerous and severe violations but received clean inspection reports from USDA.
- **Few inspectors:** In May 2020, USDA told stakeholders it had *only 95 inspectors* charged with inspecting more than 8,000 pet dealers, exhibitors, and research facilities and that they inspect over 1 million animals.
- **Partnering with puppy mills:** The [Washington Post reported](#) that USDA leaders told inspectors of a new policy that emphasized “education, not enforcement” and treating regulated entities “more as partners than as potential offenders.”
  - A USDA veterinarian who oversaw inspectors in 27 states told *the Post* the weakened enforcement had caused an “untold number of animals” to experience unnecessary suffering.
  - A USDA inspector for 20 years who left at the end of 2017 told *the Post*: “It feels like your hands are tied behind your back. You can’t do many things you’re supposed to when it comes to protecting animals.”



# Pet Store Industry Trends

The pet store industry repeatedly states that a pet products and services model is the key to retail success. The Michigan pet stores that sell puppies are an outlier in their own industry. *Sixty Michigan pet stores support HB 4838, while only 17 stores sell puppies.*

## According to the [American Pet Products Association](#):

- Americans spent \$147 billion on their pets in 2023, with food, treats, and product spending dominating.
- Pet spending is predicted to have “solid year-over-year growth through 2030” when sales are forecasted to top \$250 billion.
- Dog and cat sales were not tracked for the fifth year in a row, indicating their insignificance to the overall retail pet industry.
- [In-person shopping](#) “has seen a resurgence and is now preferred by nearly 50% of pet owners.”



According to [Pet Business Magazine](#), of the Top 25 Pet Retailers in North America *only one* (Petland) sells puppies. 2023 “was another year of phenomenal growth” with several top retailers adding more than 200 stores. More than half added at least one store, with several growing their store count by double-digits.

According to [Morgan Stanley](#), the pet industry is “poised to nearly triple to \$275 billion by 2030 thanks to a surge in new owners, favorable demographics and increased per-pet spending.” Pet owners, especially younger ones, are spending incrementally more on pet products and services and that growth will likely continue.

According to the [World Pet Association](#), in 2019 pet stores that only sold dry goods reported more total revenue per square foot (\$403) than those that sold animals (\$246).

## Michigan Pet Store Leaders

Tons of Michigan pet stores prove that selling puppies is not necessary to run a thriving pet store, including:

- **Maestro’s Dog Haus:** With locations in Ferndale & Bloomfield Hills, they celebrated their 10-year anniversary in 2022 and are thriving by catering to many dietary preferences.
- **Wags to Wiskers:** These 4 “community-based” stores offer food, treats, supplies, grooming, online ordering, and a business model where customers are friends. They host events and donate thousands of dollars’ worth of cat and dog food to local rescues in Southeast Michigan.
- **Premier Pet Supply:** This family-owned local chain with 13 stores takes a natural and holistic approach to pet nutrition. In operation since 1992, they offer monthly deals, weekend adoption events, and have been voted “Best Pet Supply Store” in Metro Detroit by at least 5 different publications.
- **Pet Supplies Plus:** This chain, with 20+ stores in Michigan, offers a wide variety of pet food and products as well as self-serve dog wash stations. Many locations also offer grooming, delivery, curbside pickup and a visiting pet care clinic offering low-cost veterinary services.
- **PetSmart and PetCo:** Both large chains have over 20 stores in Michigan and have never sold dogs or cats. They offer a wide range of products and services and partner with shelters and rescues to showcase adoptable pets. Adoption event days are often their most profitable, with adopters buying everything they need for their new pet, often spending 5 times more than the average shopper.



# COALITION OF ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS IN SUPPORT OF MICHIGAN'S PUPPY PROTECTION BILL (HB 4838)



## 29 Animal Welfare Organizations

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| All About Animals Rescue - Warren, MI            | Michele's Rescue - Grand Rapids, MI                          |
| Attorneys For Animals - Statewide                | Michigan Humane - Detroit, MI                                |
| BestPals Animal Rescue Center - Holland, MI      | Michigan Pet Alliance - Statewide                            |
| Caffeinated Canine Rescue - Portland, MI         | Michigan Pug Rescue "Pug Luv" - Farmington, MI               |
| Capital Area Humane Society - Lansing, MI        | Mosh Pit Rescue - Grand Rapids, MI                           |
| Cherryland Humane Society - Traverse City, MI    | Naked K9 and Small Dog Rescue - Erie, MI                     |
| Compass Dog Rescue - Huntington Woods, MI        | New Hope Pet Rescue - Charlotte, MI                          |
| Delta Animal Shelter - Escanaba, MI              | Paws for Life - Troy, MI                                     |
| Ferndale Cat Shelter - Ferndale, MI              | Streethearts Animal Rescue - Burton, MI                      |
| Few Steps From Home Animal Rescue - Gladwin, MI  | Tina's Bed and Biscuit - Beulah, MI                          |
| Great Lakes Boxer Rescue - Sanford, MI           | Bailing out Benji - National                                 |
| Great Lakes Weimaraner Rescue - Grand Rapids, MI | Best Friends Animal Society - National                       |
| Harbor Humane Society - Holland, MI              | The Humane Society of the United States - National           |
| Humane Society of Huron Valley - Ann Arbor, MI   | The Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association - National |
| Mama Dog Rescue - Warren, MI                     |  |