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Dedicated to making Michigan a no more homeless pets state.

May 14, 2018

Dear House Agriculture Committee,

Almost all puppies sold in retail pet stores come from puppy mills, where the health of dogs is disregarded to maintain a low overhead and maximize profits. Even if a breeder is USDA-licensed and without violations, this says nothing about the quality of the breeder. USDA standards are shockingly low, allowing dogs to spend their entire lives languishing in wire cages only six inches larger than themselves. Dogs bred in these facilities often spend their entire lives in stacked, cramped wire cages, producing litter after litter until their bodies wear out. Dogs in commercial kennels often lack human contact, protection from extreme weather, adequate veterinary care, and opportunities to exercise.

Commercially raised puppies frequently suffer from genetic defects, injuries, infections, and diseases. Inadequate socialization and the trauma of transportation at an early age can lead to ongoing behavioral problems.

Pet shops sell puppies for thousands of dollars to consumers unaware of their inhumane background. Many consumers are faced with significant veterinary bills or even the death of their puppy soon after purchase. In a 10-year study of more than 5,000 puppy buyer complaints received by The Humane Society of the United States, Michigan ranked 6th in number of complaints about puppies purchased from pet stores.

Stores that sell commercially raised puppies are an outlier in their own industry, as the huge majority of pet stores do not sell puppies, including the largest and most successful chains and small mom-and-pop shops.

In 2009, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) abdicated their responsibility to license or inspect pet shops by directing county animal control agencies to fulfill those duties without providing any funding, resources or guidelines. Therefore, pet stores located in Michigan are not currently licensed or inspected by any agency.

As consumers have become aware of these factory farms for dogs, they have successfully lobbied more than 260 local governments nationwide, including three cities in Michigan (Eastpointe, Fraser and New Baltimore), to ban the sale of puppy mill dogs in their communities. Even better, California and Maryland have enacted statewide bans on the retail sale of puppy mill dogs.

Michigan Pet Fund Alliance opposes the commercial breeding of dogs for the retail pet market. Consumers can put a stop to puppy mills by adopting from an animal shelter or rescue group, or purchasing from a humane and responsible breeder that can be carefully screened in person. Responsible breeders do not sell their puppies to pet stores or use third-party sellers. Instead, responsible breeders sell directly to the new owner.

Sincerely,

Michelle Spranger

Michelle Spranger
Resident of Southfield, Michigan (District 35)
Board Member, Michigan Pet Fund Alliance

