

What is a puppy mill?

Conditions in puppy mills are atrocious. Dogs are often crammed into small cages, with little or no room to move about and get needed exercise. The cages are usually not made from the proper materials, meaning they can rust or break, causing injuries or illness. The cages also have no lining, meaning dogs and puppies are left to either sit in their own excrement or walk on wire while they're there, causing disease and painful foot problems.

If improper, dirty, crowded cages weren't enough, often these cages are stacked on top of each other with nothing to separate the dogs below from the ones above. This means that excrement from the dogs above falls directly on to those below. And if a dog dies in a cage and is not removed, the body fluids of the decaying dog falls on to the ones below. This causes extreme filth and disease, and, in some cases death.

Dogs and puppies that live in puppy mills, even for short periods of time, are not treated humanely at all. They do not receive proper veterinary care and are usually left to suffer when injured or born with birth defects. Untreated injuries or birth defects cause gross deformities and even death. Diseases are also ignored, allowing them to spread to other dogs. Puppy mill dogs don't receive the proper nutrients either, if they are lucky to get fed at all. This means weaker bones and immune systems, leaving them more susceptible to injury and disease.

Lack of treatment and feeding is largely due to neglect on the miller's part. Most of the time, millers only visit their dogs to take puppies away, kill dogs that can't produce anymore, or discard already dead dogs. Dogs and puppies receive no normal human contact at all, meaning they are usually afraid of humans and not properly socialized. Visits from anyone other than the miller or his/her business associates are rare. Puppy mill dogs rarely, if ever, get regular vet visits, regardless of injuries or poor health.

Female dogs in puppy mills are often bred from their first heat cycle until they can no longer give birth, with a litter produced every heat cycle. Once litters are born they are cared for by their weak, improperly cared for mothers for only a short time before being taken away to be sold or auctioned to other millers.



Where do puppy mill dogs go?

Many mill dogs live their entire lives in the horror of puppy mills, knowing nothing but the awful conditions there. Often, their lives are shorter than the normal life expectancy of the breed due to the conditions. Puppy mills are a pure-profit industry. Inadequate food, water, shelter and veterinary care means little money is actually spent on the care of mill dogs. This means that a potentially good breeding dog can easily be sold to another miller for hundreds to thousands of dollars.

Puppies born in puppy mills are shipped to pet stores around the nation. Yes, you read right, *pet stores*. Roughly 99% of all pet stores that sell puppies get them from puppy mills. There are some pet stores that allow independent animal shelters to bring in animals for adoption, these pet stores do *not* get their dogs from puppy mills. The pet stores that get their dogs from puppy mills are ones that sell puppies for profit. These stores are often large chain stores that are purely puppy stores, with a few accessories (such as leashes, collars and toys) sold as well, but they can also be full pet stores with a puppy center in the back of the store.

Pet stores that get their puppies from mills receive them by the truckload. Puppies are torn away from their mothers before they are properly weaned and sold to stores all around the country. Puppies are shipped in trucks or airplanes like regular cargo, not like the precious, live cargo they are. Puppies are shipped in crates with as many that will fit in one crate. Often, when a pet store gets a shipment of puppies, many are dehydrated and ill. Some puppies even arrive dead. It is up to the receiving store to provide adequate health care for sick puppies they receive, and not all do.

Not all pet stores take care of the puppies they get in good health either. Many puppies are sick, or become sick soon after being sold, due to the conditions at pet stores. Other puppies develop conditions due to how and where they were born. Some develop behavioral problems depending on how long they go unpurchased. These problems all cause heartbreak for the families that purchase them; either dogs need to be put to sleep much too early or given away because of the health or behavioral problems.

All puppy-selling pet stores will tell you where they get their dogs if you ask. The best answer to listen for when you ask is, "From the local animal shelter or humane society". Know that any reputable breeder will *not* sell dogs to a pet store, and if the stores employees do not know where the dogs come from, either they don't want to tell you or really don't know. Always make sure you ask more than one employee, because some really may not know where the dogs come from.

