AN ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO STOPPING PUPPY MILLS

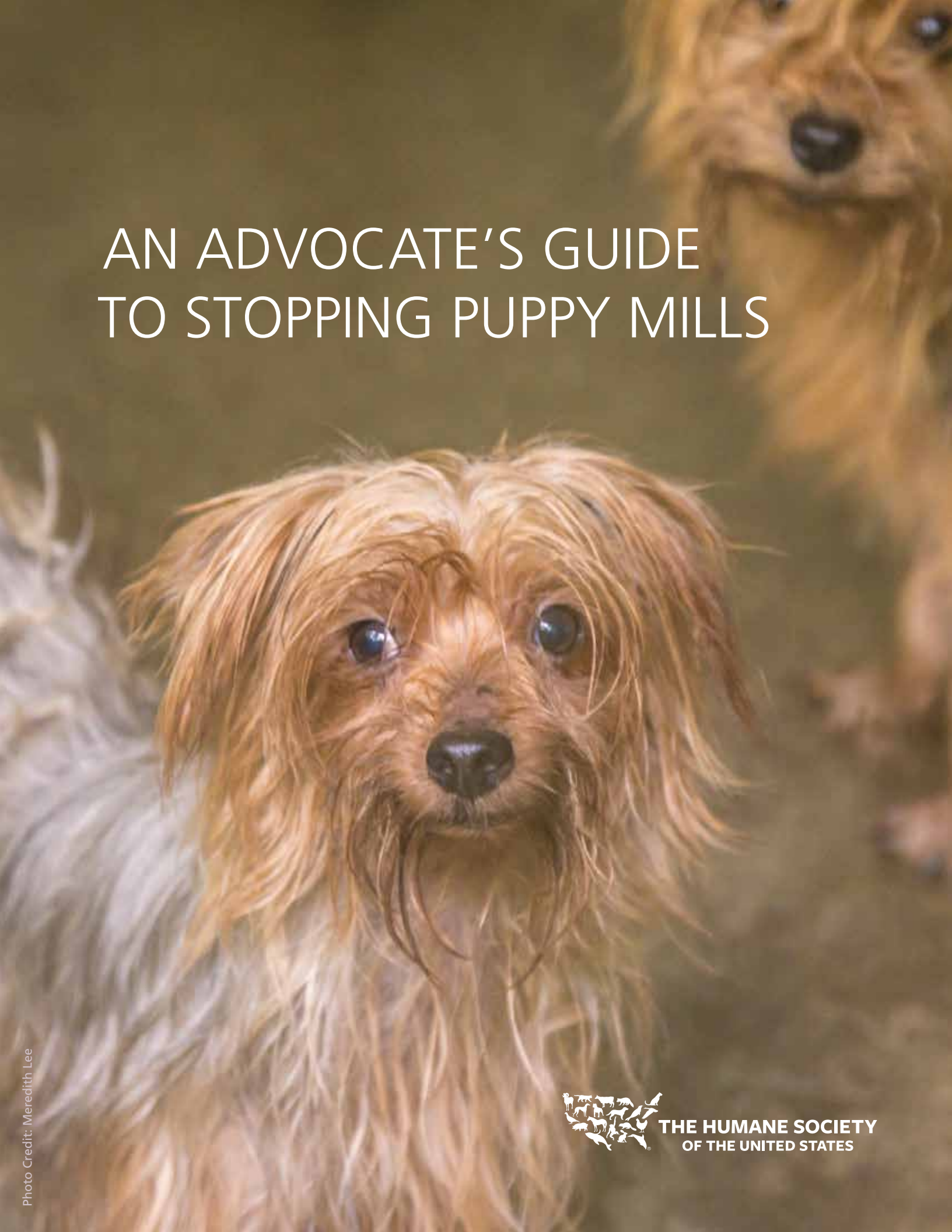

Photo Credit: Meredith Lee

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

Photo Credit: Michelle Riley

Photo Credit: Michelle Riley

"THE GREATNESS OF A COMMUNITY IS MOST ACCURATELY MEASURED BY THE COMPASSIONATE ACTIONS OF ITS MEMBERS."

–CORETTA SCOTT KING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

An Advocate's Guide to Stopping Puppy Mills

Introduction

2 | Why Can't We Just Ban All Puppy Mills?

Part One: Becoming Their Voice

5 | Internet and Media Activism
7 | Creative Outreach – Classified Ads and the Public
8 | Be Heard by Lawmakers
11 | Beginner Projects

Part Two: Boots On The Ground

15 | Puppy Friendly Pet Stores Program
15 | Research Puppy-Selling Pet Stores
18 | Organizing and Leading a Peaceful Demonstration
22 | Reporting a Problem Breeding Operation

Part Three: Passing An Ordinance

25 | Using Local Ordinances to Combat Puppy Mills

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Introduction

This toolkit is really three guides in one. Part One is for advocates who want to educate themselves and others about puppy mills, speaking up for dogs and making connections to help spread the word. Part Two is for advocates who want to tackle longer projects, such as organizing a demonstration at a puppy retail store or working with a store that might want to switch to offering rescued dogs only. Part Three is for advocates who want to pass a local ordinance.

Whether you have significant amounts of time to devote to helping dogs, or just an hour or two a week, there are many ways to make a difference. This guide will help you launch projects both simple and complex.

But first, the big question:

"Why Can't We Just Ban ALL Puppy Mills?"

One of the first questions posed by new animal advocates is why we can't simply pass a law to ban all puppy mills. This is far easier said than done. It's difficult to define a puppy mill in a law and cover all the bases. And even laws that require moderate changes in the pet industry, such as laws requiring that all commercial breeders be licensed or inspected, are incredibly difficult to pass. This is due to many factors, including politicians who do not want to appear "anti-business," intense lobbying by industries that profit from puppy mills, the difficulty in getting decision makers to agree on the definition of a puppy mill and a fear of the "slippery slope" of regulation.

Realistically, a problem as complex as puppy mills can't be solved with one stroke of the pen. But incremental changes can help ensure better care standards for breeding dogs, stronger oversight of the pet breeding industry, and stronger penalties for those who mistreat man's best friend. We must rely on public education and awareness as well, to end the financial support of puppy mills by unwary consumers.

For a more in-depth discussion of puppy mills, why they exist, and what laws are in place to help stop them, please consider taking our online course, Stopping Puppy Mills: Advocating for Change.

Photo Credit: Jamie Linder

Photo Credit: Meredith Lee

Part One: Becoming Their Voice

Letters to the editor and newspaper opinion columns are a time-honored way of getting the word out to the public about puppy mills. But increasingly, more and more people are getting their news online, and often commenting and interacting with news topics in real time. Meanwhile, puppy mills are increasingly relying on Internet sales to hide the true nature of their business. Hundreds of thousands of puppies are sold each year through Internet classified ads or direct website sales. Pet lovers who are uninformed about puppy mills often think nothing of buying a dog from a "breeder's" website, having no idea that the cute photos and misleading statements on a professional-looking website often have no basis in reality. You can help steer consumers away from puppy mills by being a voice in online social and news communities.

Internet and Media Activism

Friend us and follow us!

Be informed! Keep updated on the ever-changing news about puppy mills by following and sharing the social media pages of the HSUS's Stop Puppy Mills Campaign and similar groups. In addition to "liking" the Facebook page, make sure it actually shows up in your newsfeed by selecting the pull-down list under the Following button, selecting "In Your Newsfeed," and selecting "See First." This ensures that you are immediately notified of news and updates related to puppy mills.

- Find us on Facebook: facebook.com/hsuspuppymills
- Twitter: twitter.com/HSUSPuppyMills
- Instagram: instagram.com/hsus_stoppuppymills

Be a resource online

The Internet is a great tool to reach animal lovers and help educate them in a friendly way—before they make the mistake of buying a puppy from a bad breeder. Get active in Internet or social media groups and use your knowledge to help educate others who are thinking about buying a dog. You can also get to know the people who manage sites for your local yard sale/classifieds groups and encourage them to make it a policy within the group not to allow ads for pet sellers.

If people are interested in buying a dog, let them know where they can find shelters or breed rescues. Share our video on three things to know before purchasing a dog (see humanesociety.org/videos), or direct them to local shelters or to the HSUS's Good Breeder Checklist at humanesociety.org/breeders.

Just remember to keep the dialog calm, factual and respectful; no one loses listeners faster than a person who resorts to rudeness or foul language to make a point.

Blogger outreach and classifieds

Have friends who blog? See if they'd be willing to allow you to "guest" blog about an issue you are passionate about. If it's the holiday season, for example, ask if you can blog about the importance of not buying puppies from pet stores as impulse gifts.

Keep an eye on websites where puppies are offered for sale. Not all of them will allow posts from the general public, but if you see such ads (for example, in a neighborhood forum or an online classified service for your local newspaper), do what you can to help steer people in the right direction. Be polite and seek to inform, not accuse. A sample posting may read:

> A puppy is not a sweater! The Humane Society of the United States recommends never buying a puppy over the Internet. Many puppies sold online are from puppy mills and many are sick. To avoid puppy mills, always visit your breeder in person – or better yet, adopt from a shelter. For more information, go to humanesociety.org/puppy.
>
> Have you checked the shelter? Before buying a puppy, please remember there are many animals, including purebreds, waiting for homes at your local animal shelter or breed rescue group. For more information, go to shelterpetproject.org or humanesociety.org/puppy.

Online media

Many online news sources allow visitors to comment on articles on their websites or social media pages. If you see a story involving dogs, puppy mills or pet stores that sell dogs, use your online comments to spread the word about alternatives such as breed rescue groups and animal shelters. Include a link to sites with further info, such as humanesociety.org/puppymills.

Photo Credit: Meredith Lee

Some suggested talking points are below:

- Two million puppies are born in puppy mills each year in the U.S.
- Parent dogs at puppy mills are typically kept in cages for their entire lives, breeding litter after litter and in most cases never setting foot outside of a cage.
- Puppy mill puppies are most commonly sold in pet stores, over the Internet, through newspaper classified ads and at outdoor venues, such as flea markets.
- Puppy mills treat dogs badly. Documented conditions include over-breeding, stacked, cramped cages, little to no veterinary care, lack of clean or adequate food and water, no protection from the elements, no socialization outside the cage, and operators abandoning or killing dogs who can no longer breed.
- The surest way to stop puppy mills is for consumers to stop buying the puppies.
- The best place to look for a puppy is your local animal shelter. Nationwide, one out of every four dogs in a shelter is a purebred, and mixed-breed dogs also make wonderful pets.
- Rescue groups exist for virtually every breed of dog, and people can look up rescued dogs by size or breed at sites like theshelterpetproject.org.
- People who choose to get their dog from a breeder should make sure to meet the breeder in person and see for themselves how the puppy and his or her parents are living. See the Good Breeder Checklist at humanesociety.org/puppy.

Join a local effort

- Join the HSUS's online community at humanesociety.org to receive notices and alerts about bills that are introduced in your state. The HSUS also has state-specific Facebook groups in many states, to help you keep informed about local measures and events.
- Want to do more? Volunteer with your local HSUS district leader – or become one yourself – to keep up with all state-level animal welfare issues.
- Sign up as an HSUS Ally to be contacted about additional volunteer opportunities.

Creative Outreach – Classified Ads and the Public

There are many free online sites where questionable breeders post ads for puppies. You can take advantage of the same forums by posting ads offering "free information on how to get a puppy." Some sites also allow you to "flag" ads that violate certain terms of service, so if a site does not allow pet sales, you can report ads that violate the policy and have them removed.

Because of the revenue generated by pets-for-sale ads, it's unlikely you'll be able to get the newspaper to stop running them entirely, but you may be able to get them to run an educational ad to help people find out if they are working with a reputable breeder.

See sample classified ads below.

Sample Classified Ads

Never buy a puppy without seeing the place where they were born and raised. Find out how to get a puppy from a humane source and how to avoid puppy mills at humanesociety.org/puppy.

Avoid buying a sickly puppy from a puppy mill. Never buy a puppy without seeing where the pet was born and raised. If you see inhumane conditions, notify animal control or law enforcement. You can find a checklist for identifying a responsible dog breeder at humanesociety.org/puppy.

Looking for top quality puppies? Don't be scammed or fooled by a bad breeder. Find out how to get a puppy from a responsible breeder at dontbuyintopuppymills.com.

Don't risk buying a sick puppy! Find out how to get a puppy from a healthy and humane source at humanesociety.org/puppy.

Photo Credit: Kristen Tullo

Be Heard by Lawmakers

Voter registration

It might sound elementary, but the first thing you can do to help stop puppy mills is to register to vote, and remember to re-register if you move to a new address. Then, research candidates running for local, state, and federal positions and support those with animal-friendly platforms.

Humane lobby days

With the help of the HSUS, you can be a lobbyist for a day! Find out if there is a Humane Lobby Day in your area. The HSUS can help you schedule an in-person meeting with a lawmaker who represents you in the state capitol, and you will be given specific talking points and training at no charge. You'll also get to meet other advocates from across your state, and if you share a state legislator with others in attendance you'll be able to connect with your legislator as a team.

If there is no Humane Lobby Day scheduled near you, follow the tips on the next page to start reaching out on your own. You can also look up your state HSUS page on social media to find out about organized animal welfare efforts in your state. For example, "The Humane Society of the United States – New York," "The Humane Society of the United States – California," and so on is the naming convention used by the HSUS on Facebook. Keep up with what is happening in your state so you will be ready for the next call to action.

Photo Credit: JP Goodwin, HSUS

GIVE AS MUCH POSITIVE FEEDBACK TO REPORTERS, MEDIA OUTLETS AND LAWMAKERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA AS POSSIBLE BY TAGGING THEM OR POSTING ON THEIR PAGES. FOR EXAMPLE: "THANK YOU, @REPSHAW, FOR POSTING ON @NATIONALDOGDAY! PLEASE INTRODUCE A LAW TO PROTECT ALL DOGS IN PA'S @PUPPYMILLS!"

Photo courtesy of Larry Cohen

Photo Credit: Michelle Riley

Photo courtesy of Marianne Martin

Find out who represents you

Reach out to your local elected officials and ask them to support measures designed to protect dogs in puppy mills. You can write them, call, tweet and follow them on social media. Tips for beginners:

- Find out who your state and local elected officials are by simply entering your zip code at www.humanesociety.org/stateleglookup. Do the same at www.humanesociety.org/leglookup to see who your federal Senators and Representatives are. Many lawmakers have a presence on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. "Friend" them or "like" their pages and share your concerns and comments. Facebook has a great feature that allows you to verify you are a lawmaker's constituent. Then, every time you comment, a symbol appears next to your name letting your lawmaker know you are his/her constituent—an important distinction.

- If you are new to lobbying, there are many online resources that can help you find out more about laws pending in your state and how to lobby effectively for reasonable changes. Information on the basic do's and don'ts of lobbying can be found at humanesociety.org/action/toolkit/lobbying_dos_and_donts.html.

- Find out if your state has a Political Action Committee (PAC) devoted to animal welfare issues so you can network with other voters. Some states with animal-friendly PACs include CA, KS, MO, NJ, NY, PA and TX.

- You can call or email your representatives, but if possible, take it a step further and meet with them personally. One lawmaker told HSUS staff that over the course of a year, fewer than ten private citizens made appointments to meet with him in person, which made their conversations stand out. While your state and federal legislators are in their home offices, schedule appointments and/or attend town meetings to let them know that you want animal-friendly legislation supported.

- If you choose to contact your legislator by phone, keep it simple. An assistant will probably answer. State your name and address so the legislator knows you are a constituent, then briefly describe the issue. For example: "My name is Toby Smith and I live in Bethesda. I am calling to ask Senator J to co-sponsor, and work to pass, S. ABC/H.R.XYZ, the End Puppy Mills Act, to crack down on unlicensed puppy mills."

- Find out more about the local elections in your state. Primary elections are a great opportunity to make a difference in your own community where commissioner and council seats may be open. Talk to candidates about your concerns and help elect animal friendly officials close to home.

- Once you have made contact, keep in touch regularly with your elected officials, and don't forget to thank them when they support animal-friendly measures.

Photo Credit: Shannon Johnstone

Federal legislators – U.S. House of Representatives members and Senators

Let your member of the U.S. House of Representatives and two U.S. senators know that puppy mills are an important issue to you. Ask that they support laws to crack down on puppy mills and that they urge the USDA to strengthen and strongly enforce the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act and make commercial breeder inspection reports publically available.

Contact senators at: The Honorable {Senator Name}, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510; Contact representatives at: The Honorable {Representative Name}, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515. Or call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121.

State legislators

Encourage state legislators to pass laws that require commercial breeders to provide humane care to the animals. Ask them to require that puppy mills be inspected by the state and regulated like any other business, and to ensure that they are collecting sales tax and paying income tax. Stress that this is not an attempt to stop breeding or regulate small, responsible breeders but rather to address larger operations that breed many dogs in poor conditions. In many states, most of these operations are not regulated or inspected by any state or federal agency.

Also, talk to lawmakers about cutting off puppy mill supply chains. In October 2017, California became the first state to prohibit the sale of commercially raised puppies, kittens, and rabbits in pet stores, and in April 2018, the state of Maryland passed a similar law. There are also several states and major cities that prohibit outdoor sales of puppies, ensuring that puppies won't be sold in flea markets, roadsides, and in parking lots. Ask your elected official to sponsor similar bills in your state.

Find elected officials, including governors, state legislators and more at congress.org or humanesociety.org/leglookup.

Local lawmakers

Do you want to lead the way in passing an ordinance in your city, county or town? Hundreds of animal advocates have been successful in passing ordinances at the local level. See Part Three of this guide for information on passing a local ordinance.

STRESS THAT THIS IS NOT AN ATTEMPT TO STOP BREEDING OR REGULATE SMALL, RESPONSIBLE BREEDERS BUT RATHER LARGER OPERATIONS THAT BREED MANY DOGS IN POOR CONDITIONS.

Beginner Projects

Put the fun in fundraising Websites like MyHumane.org and Fundraise.com make it easy to raise funds for nonprofits that help puppy mill dogs. You can participate in a race and collect donations, or create a team of people to expand your impact. Sites like MyHumane can also help you dedicate your birthday or wedding day to the cause by asking others to donate in your name, among other projects.

Gear and displays Spark conversations about puppy mills and responsible pet ownership with Stop Puppy Mills t-shirts, flyers and other campaign gear at humanesociety.org. Or find out if your local library or community center allows members of the public to create displays on topics of interest to the community. You can make your own flyers and posters for the display or order them from us. Email stop-puppy-mills@humanesociety.org if you need help setting up a local display.

Billboards If you would like to sponsor a billboard in your community, and are willing to rent the space or can arrange to have the space donated by the company, the HSUS's Stop Puppy Mills Campaign may be able to provide the artwork for the billboard at no cost to you. Start by scoping out a good location and find out who owns the location, whether it is available and what the rates are. Once you have identified a good location, contact stop-puppy-mills@humanesociety.org for more information.

Study online Our six-part online course, Stopping Puppy Mills, is perfect for teens or adults who want a more in-depth study of puppy mill issues. The self-paced course is designed to help advocates understand the most common problems inherent in puppy mills, and what can be done to address them. Participants will gain a greater understanding of what puppy mills are, why they continue to thrive despite increases in public awareness and strides in public policy, and what individuals can do to help pass new laws and create change. Sign up for the course here: humanesociety.org/puppymillclass. Or read, "The Doggie in the Window" by Rory Kress, a new book that provides a readable overview of the puppy mills issue.

Do you know a responsible breeder?

If you know a responsible breeder, or are one, contact the HSUS and ask to speak with someone in the puppy mills campaign. Compassionate, reputable dog breeders play a vital role in the effort to help make puppy mills history. Good breeders are in a unique position to offer perspective and guidance on the proper way to care for dogs used for breeding and their puppies. Good breeders can help set a standard for the industry and help prospective buyers understand how important humane care is for breeding dogs and puppies. Visit us at humanesociety.org/breeder.

Do you know an animal-friendly teacher or educator?

The HSUS Stop Puppy Mills Campaign has a humane education program, From Nose to Tail, which offers materials for teachers of grades K-5, and others who work with students of those age groups. The kits include lesson plans, worksheets and humane-themed picture books. The curriculum comes in versions for GR K-2 and GR 3-5, and includes both puppy mill and related humane content; it is aligned with Common Core and National Education standards, and highlights character education concepts such as responsibility, respect for others, and empathy. Some teachers may qualify to receive the kits and books for free. Find out more at humanesociety.org/nosetotail.

Photo Credit: Amie Chou

Get creative! Some advocates who have adopted rescued puppy mill dogs have even made their dogs famous on social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram. Examples of Instagram-famous dogs include Toast (Toastmeetsworld) and Ella Bean (Ellabeanthedog). Both have very large numbers of followers and use their platforms to spread the word about puppy mills. These dogs and many other #puptivists, as they call themselves, educate a new generation by making activism chic. One way they helped dogs by using more than lip service? Ella Bean raised money to help dogs in puppy mills by promoting paw print pins sold by Pincause.com; $2 from each pin was donated to the HSUS's Stop Puppy Mills campaign. Toast has brought awareness to the issue through books, magazines, and national television appearances.

"ALONE, WE CAN DO SO LITTLE; TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH."
– HELEN KELLER
STOP PUPPY MILLS
SAVE DOGS LIKE BABY
Stop Puppy Mills
humanesociety.org/stoppuppymills
STOP PUPPY MILLS
humanesociety.org/puppymills
THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Photo Credit: Meredith Lee
Stop Puppy Mills
humanesociety.org/stoppuppymills
SAVE DOGS LIKE BABY
Stop Puppy Mills
humanesociety.org/stoppuppymills
BEFORE
AFTER
Stop Puppy Mills
0,000 STRONG
TO STOP
UPPY MILLS!!

PART TWO:
Boots on the Ground

Photo courtesy of Pets Plus Natural

Photo courtesy of Pets Plus Natural

Puppy-Friendly Pet Stores Program

Join us in applauding pet stores that do not sell puppies and encouraging stores that do sell puppies to stop.

Is your local pet store puppy-friendly?

View the complete state-by-state list of Puppy Friendly Pet Stores at humanesociety.org/puppystores.

Help the HSUS sign up pet stores to the Puppy Friendly Pet Stores program, which encourages storeowners to implement a "puppy friendly" policy by refusing to sell puppies unless they come from shelters or rescues. Stores that already do not sell puppies can sign up to show that they are taking a stand against puppy mills and to make official their policy of not selling puppies. Stores that do sell puppies should be encouraged to help end pet overpopulation by stopping the sale of commercially raised puppies and supporting their local shelters and pet adoption programs instead.

Stores that sign up will be listed on the HSUS website, and they will also receive free display materials and educational flyers for their customers on adopting a pet or finding a responsible dog breeder. They will also be searchable via our text app.

Text "PUPPY" to 30644 to see puppy-friendly stores near you (message and data rates apply)

You can help sign up stores in your community by taking a few simple steps:

- Email us at stop-puppy-mills@humanesociety.org with your name, email address, phone number, city, and state. Or, fill out the online form at TinyUrl.com/puppyadvocate.
- Check and see whether stores in your area have already signed up for the program at humanesociety.org/puppystores.
- Start visiting your local pet store(s) to explain the benefits of the program and invite them to sign on.
- Return the signed pledge to the puppy mills campaign and we will do the rest!

Research Puppy-Selling Pet Stores

Is there a pet store nearby that you suspect is selling puppy mill dogs? There are steps you can take to find out more.

Photo Credit: Meredith Blanchard

Photo Credit: Hilary Sloan

Photo Credit: Peter Taylor

Identify the suppliers

Movement of dogs across state lines usually requires filing certain documents with a specific state agency. In most states these records are filed and stored within the State Department of Agriculture and in most, but not all, of the 50 states you can access these records through public records laws. The individual state laws that enable citizens to see these records are referred to as Open Records laws or Right to Know laws and may also be referred to as Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) laws. For information on your state open records laws, visit the National Freedom of Information Coalition at www.nfoic.org.

It's a little different in every state, but you can make an open records request by mail, or call the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Division of Animal Industry (or similar) and ask if you can make an appointment to look at and copy some small animal health certificate import records. Depending on the state and how busy their office is, you may have to fill out a form or request an appointment. You'll need cash or check to pay for copying or related costs. If possible, plan to stay more than an hour because there may be hundreds of records.

Starting with the most recent records you can find connected to the pet store(s), copy as many as needed. Combined with publically available documents like the HSUS's Horrible Hundred Reports and state or federal (USDA) inspection reports, these documents can be used as the base of your research on the store's suppliers.

Unfortunately, in February 2017, the USDA abruptly removed most of the animal welfare inspection reports and enforcement documents from its website. Although some of the information was later restored, most of the breeder inspection reports now only list the city and state of the operator as well as their violations, with no name or license number listed. Requesting the documents directly from the USDA via individual Freedom of Information Act requests has yielded poor results as well. Some members of Congress are working to push the USDA to restore the documents, but until that happens, other documents such as state and court records may be more helpful in linking recent violators to stores.

Or, you can visit the pet store and politely inquire about the puppies and where they come from. You will most likely be told that the puppies come from "private breeders" or "USDA licensed breeders." Indicating a specific puppy or two, ask if you can see the paperwork so you can learn more about the puppy. Make note of the name and general location of the breeder. If asked to leave by the store's management, please do so, or you could invite legal trouble.

Photo Credit: Daniel Aguilar

In most states, pet stores have the right to keep supplier information private. However, in some states, such as CT, NJ, and VA, pet stores are required by law to post information about their breeders on or near each animal's cage.

Do your research

Find out if the breeder(s) are licensed with the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal Care Division.

If the breeders you have identified are not licensed with the USDA, find out if they are licensed and inspected by their state. If they are, you can request their inspection reports from the agency in charge of licensing via open public records requests. In many states, the state Department of Agriculture inspects kennels or breeders. In a few states, such as PA and NY, the inspection reports are posted online for easy access. For details on state puppy mill laws, go to humanesociety.org/pmlaws.

If you can't find inspection reports online, but the breeder is licensed in a state that performs inspections, or if you want to study the health certificates that most state departments of agriculture keep on file for animals shipped into or out of the state, you will need to file a public records request or freedom of information act request. Make sure your request is not too broad or your request may be delayed for months. Find out more about state FOIA laws at foiadvocates.com. You can find sample copies of public records request letters at nfoic.org/foi-center.

Check the HSUS's **Horrible Hundred Reports** for puppy mills with problematic histories. Do an Internet search to find out more about the breeders or store.

Contact the HSUS and your local humane society, shelter and Better Business Bureau to see if they have had complaints about the store or its puppies.

Gather information from individuals who may have purchased sick puppies at the store. Check consumer reviews online on sites such as Yelp.com and contact those who have posted sick puppy complaints. Ask complainants to fill out the Pet Seller Complaint Form at humanesociety.org/puppycomplaint, or print out extra copies of the form and provide them to complainants.

Share your results

Put together your findings:

Is the pet store dealing with unlicensed breeders?

Are they selling puppies from breeders who have been in the Horrible Hundred report, or from massive, out-of-state brokers while claiming that they do not sell puppy mill dogs?

Do you have inspection reports on some of the breeders or brokers indicating violations of the Animal Welfare Act?

Have you or someone you know purchased a sick puppy at the store?

Write a concise summary of your findings.

Contact a local investigative reporter and pitch the story. Let them know that you have exclusive information about the pet store. Contact only one reporter at a time; many reporters will not respond to a query if it has been copied and sent to multiple outlets. If you suspect illegal conditions, see "Reporting a Problem Breeding Operation" or call 1-877-MILL-TIP for more information on working with law enforcement.

Send a copy of your research to: stop-puppy-mills@humanesociety.org.

Organizing and Leading a Peaceful Pet Store Demonstration

Well-implemented pet store demonstrations educate the general public about where pet store puppies come from and also generate support for adopting homeless animals from shelters and rescue groups.

The Stop Puppy Mills Campaign of the Humane Society of the United States encourages you to do your homework, prepare and take action lawfully and peacefully so that your demonstration can be successful.

How do I know if I am staying within the law?

Your most important task in planning and carrying out a demonstration is to ensure that you do not violate any local ordinances. Contact the local police department and ask whether a permit is needed to demonstrate in your area. Not all localities require a permit, but they are usually easy to obtain, if needed. Your local authorities will advise you about procedures that should be followed, such as where you are legally allowed to stand (generally, this is on the public sidewalk).

Make sure that everyone attending your demonstration is on the same page about appropriate conduct. Be positive, polite, and knowledgeable, and interact with the public in a respectful manner about why this is an important issue. Do not stand in the street, block entrances or exits or prevent customers from entering the store or store's parking lot.

Photo Credit: Peggy Grandahl and Morgan Drdak

Do not engage with anyone who approaches you in a violent or accusatory tone.

Do not make statements about the store that you do not know to be true; make sure that you have proper supporting documentation for any statements that you make. Or stick to very general statements such as "Adopt, don't shop." Because state laws vary, the HSUS encourages you to concentrate on stores for which you have documentation and to consult with a local attorney before carrying out your demonstration.

What kind of research is needed before I begin demonstrating?

- Set up a meeting with or send a letter to the pet store owner to make sure she or he is aware of the reason you intend to conduct a demonstration. You can propose that the store discontinue selling puppies and instead host adoption events for shelters and rescue groups. Many pet stores are making this humane change and creating a positive example of corporate responsibility for other businesses to follow. For more on how to work with pet stores see the information on the HSUS's Puppy Friendly Pet Stores program (www.humanesociety.org/puppystores).
- Research the store and its suppliers using the suggestions outlined earlier in this guide. Ideally, you will want to know where a pet store obtains its puppies. In most states, stores are not required to give out information identifying their suppliers, but in some states, including CT, NJ, and VA, the information must be posted clearly on or near each animal's cage. If you are not able to get clear information about where a pet store gets its puppies, stick to generic messaging promoting shelter adoption over purchase.

Photo Credit: Michelle Riley

- Contact your local humane society, shelter and Better Business Bureau as well as Yelp and other consumer reporting sites to see if they have had complaints about the store or its puppies.
- Gather information from individuals who may have purchased sick puppies at the store. Ask complainants to fill out the Pet Seller Complaint Form at www.humanesociety.org/puppycomplaint or print out extra copies of the form and provide them to complainants.
- Gather information on local shelters and pet overpopulation, if applicable. Maddie's Fund has a website that lists shelter euthanasia rates for many parts of the country at maddiesfund.org/comparative-db.htm. This information may help you explain why bringing additional dogs into retail stores from out of state is a bad idea when so many local pets are already in need of homes.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Bonsal

ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHODS OF NETWORKING IS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA SITES SUCH AS FACEBOOK AND MEETUP. THESE ARE GREAT PLACES TO MAKE CONTACTS AND GARNER SUPPORT FOR YOUR DEMONSTRATION.

Photo courtesy of Karen Paul

Photo courtesy of Kelly Franklin

TIP: STRIVE TO MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL AND APPROACHABLE ATTITUDE, NO MATTER HOW EMOTIONAL THE SUBJECT MATTER. FOCUS ON THE FACTS REGARDING THE TREATMENT OF DOGS IN PUPPY MILLS AND THE AVAILABILITY OF GREAT PETS AT SHELTERS.

WHY? ADVOCATES WHO SEEM VERY ANGRY OR EMOTIONAL DRAW MORE ATTENTION TO THEMSELVES THAN TO THE SUBJECT MATTER. THOSE WHO DON'T SEEM REASONABLE WILL BE DISMISSED AS EXTREMISTS.

Whom can I get to join me in these demonstrations?

Mobilize individuals for your demonstration by networking with friends, co-workers, local animal activist groups and local animal shelters. One of the most effective methods of networking is via social media sites such as Facebook and Meetup. These are great places to make contacts and garner support for your demonstration.

Where can I get posters and materials to hand out?

You can make your own materials or you can purchase educational materials from the HSUS or other organizations. A variety of handmade and professionally printed signage makes a good impression on passersby. Make sure your sign text is visible from a distance and most importantly that your message is clear. Along with educational materials, you may want to create a handout with a list of animals that are currently available for adoption in shelters in your area. You should also use a signup sheet so that you have contact information for those in attendance.

Can I get the media to come to the demonstration?

To maximize exposure of the issue in your local area, contact your local newspapers, TV stations or other media by phone, email or online to let them know about the demonstration. Send them a short media advisory a day or two before the event and then call by phone on the morning of the event. Your advisory should include important details of your event such as why, when, where and whom to contact. See the sample media advisory on the facing page; it could be used for a demonstration when there is good, up-to-date, documentation to back up a connection to puppy mills. Otherwise, the message should be generic and should focus on adoptions, for example, "Adopt! Don't Shop!"

Is there anything else I need to know?

Bring a list of talking points to the demonstration, so that you can easily refer to them while speaking to media or passersby if needed. Consider including statistics on this list, such as:

- 2 million—Estimated number of puppies sold annually who originated from puppy mills (USDA licensed and non-USDA licensed).
- 2 to 3 million—Estimated number of dogs and cats euthanized by shelters every year in the U.S.
- 10,000—Estimated number of puppy mills in the U.S.
- Any statistics you may be able to gather about local shelters and homeless pet issues.

Enlist a volunteer to help you welcome your new demonstrators. You and she or he should collect contact information, maintain contact and show gratitude for their involvement. If possible, assign someone to take photos that may be used by media or posted on social networks.

Sample Media Advisory

Pet Stores Support Puppy Mills: Concerned Consumers to Demonstrate at

[insert pet store name here]

Demonstration To Educate Consumers About Cruelties in America's Puppy Mills

WHO: [Name of group or organizing individuals]

WHAT: Demonstration in front of [pet store name] to draw attention to the connection between pet stores and inhumane breeding facilities called puppy mills. We are calling on [pet store name] to stop selling puppies and instead work with local shelters and breed rescue groups to promote adoption of animals. Demonstrators will provide information about humane pet acquisition to passersby.

WHEN: [Date and time]

WHERE: [Cross streets or address and specific location on public property, include city and state]

For more information, contact [name and phone number of organizer].

More information about nationwide efforts to stop puppy mills can be found at: dontbuyintopuppymills.com.

Photo Credit: Meredith Lee

Reporting a Problem Breeding Operation

Of course, one of the fastest ways to take action against a puppy mill with clearly substandard conditions is to contact law enforcement. Eyewitnesses with recent, firsthand information should make the call.

Bear in mind that most puppy mills are not illegal. Keeping dogs in cages or owning large numbers of dogs is not unlawful in most areas as long as the dogs have the basics of food, water and shelter. But if there appears to be cruelty (neglect and/or abuse such as highly unsanitary conditions, cramped cages, sick animals, lack of food/water/shelter from the elements, etc.) immediately contact the facility's local animal control agency. If none of these agencies exists in the area, call the local law enforcement agency (police, sheriff or constable) or health department to report the situation. You have the option of making an anonymous complaint, but enforcement agencies are more likely to take action if they have a witness who is willing to testify to what he or she saw.

If the breeding facility has five or more breeding females and sells to pet stores, brokers, by mail or online sight-unseen, they are required to be licensed and inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). To report a facility that is doing business without a USDA license or one that is licensed but has potentially illegal conditions, you can fill out an online complaint directly with the USDA at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalwelfare/complaint-form.

Regardless of whether the facility requires a USDA or local kennel license, or neither, if animals are not being properly cared for, the breeder may be in violation of animal cruelty laws. Contact the local animal care and control office or law enforcement officials. They can help you file a complaint or direct you to the correct agency that handles such complaints, if one exists. In some states, it is entirely unclear what agency, if any, has jurisdiction over puppy mill investigations. Be persistent, but be respectful and patient with enforcement agencies as they may not be required to inspect and may be unwilling to do so if the caller is unpleasant to deal with.

It is imperative that you have as much information as possible and have it organized before calling any agency. The more you are able to provide, the easier it is for any agency to follow through. Please note that you should never enter anyone's property without permission. Be prepared with as much of the information on the right as possible before calling in a complaint.

CONTACT THE HSUS PUPPY MILLS TASK FORCE AT 1-877-MILL-TIP IF YOU ARE UNSURE OF WHAT TO DO OR NEED HELP REPORTING A PUPPY MILL.

Information to Collect

Name of breeder and/or business name:

_____

Address:

_____

Phone number: (___) _____ - _____

Email address and/or website of the seller: _____

Your concerns (it often helps to have this written out for reference before calling so you don't forget anything):

_____

Number of animals present: _____

Number of breeds present: _____

Description of the overall conditions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Mode of sale (for example, online, through a flea market, etc. If possible, save any copies of advertisements placed by the facility):

_____

If the complaint came about after an animal was purchased from the facility, keep any photos or veterinary records documenting the condition of the animal.

_____

NOTE: Do not alert the media or trespass to gather evidence; this may compromise investigations that are already underway. Alert the media only as a last resort after all other efforts to get law enforcement involved have failed.

Photo Credit: Meredith Lee

PART THREE:
Passing an Ordinance

Photo Credit: Michael Bernard

Using Local Ordinances to Combat Puppy Mills

Animal-friendly communities throughout the country are finding creative ways to combat puppy mill cruelty. Many communities have enacted ordinances directed at reducing the suffering of puppy mill dogs – by regulating either the puppy mills or pet stores themselves or the manner in which puppies are sold. You can advocate for new measures in your own community that will improve the lives of dogs in puppy mills and lessen the demand for puppy mill puppies.

What kind of ordinance is right?

The right ordinance for your community is the one that will address the problems present in your area. If there are massive dog breeding facilities in your county, consider an ordinance that would place a limit on the number of dogs in a breeding facility and outlaw common practices such as stacking of cages and use of wire flooring, and require such facilities to be regularly inspected. If there is a pet store in your town selling sick puppies, consider prohibiting the sale of puppies in pet stores, unless they come from shelters. If unscrupulous puppy mill operators from a neighboring county are selling their puppies at a local flea market or parking lot, work toward prohibiting those types of public sales. In determining what's right for your area, it may be helpful to talk with the local officials who are (or will be) charged with enforcement, such as animal control officers or public health officials.

That being said, some ordinances are aimed not at solving current problems but at preventing them. For example, many towns have passed ordinances to ban the sale of puppies in pet stores even though they didn't have any such businesses in town. These preventive measures are sometimes easier to pass because they won't affect any local businesses, yet will prevent problems in the future. After all, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Whichever specific target area you decide to address, chances are good that another community has done much of your work already. Examples include:

- Ordinances like the one in Philadelphia, and morethan 260 other localities, that ban the sale of all commercially raised puppies in pet stores. If a pet store in your town sells puppies, they likely are coming from puppy mills. Consider approaching your lawmakers about a pet shop ordinance that only allows the sale of dogs and cats from shelters. Examples of successful ordinances of this type include Philadelphia (§ 10-117 of Philadelphia code) (a large city example), Cherry Hill, NJ (Ordinance 2015-15) (a small town example), and Salt Lake County (Section 8.03.035) (a county example).
- A Romulus, NY ordinance requires commercial pet breeders to provide humane treatment and housing for dogs and cats, and provides for regular inspection of their facilities. Romulus also enacted a moratorium on the establishment or expansion of commercial breeding facilities.
- A Sherburne County, MN ordinance bans the keeping of more than 40 dogs and requires that no more than 10 of them may be intact females. (Sherburne County Private and Commercial Kennel Licensing Ordinance 134)
- Pima, AZ, Houston, TX and East Baton Rouge, LA each have ordinances banning the sale of animals at swap meets and flea markets. (Pima County, AZ, 6.04.170 Sale of animals at swap meets and public property prohibited—Exceptions—Penalty, and Houston, TX, Sec. 6-118. Roadside and flea market sales)
- A Memphis, TN ordinance bans the sale of animals on roadsides and in parking lots. (Sec. 5-15 Roadside sale of animals prohibited)

See a spreadsheet of state laws that regulate puppy mills at humanesociety.org/pmlaws.

See a complete list of localities that have banned pet store puppy sales at www.humanesociety.org/pmlocalities.

To search for municipal codes, including those mentioned here, visit library.municode.com.

Photo Credit: Corey Roscoe, HSUS

Learn the process

The process for local legislation varies around the country, so take the time to get familiar with how things work in your community. An official or employee in your local government may be able to help you. Typically, for a city or county government, an ordinance is introduced by a member of that council. These individuals are usually called councilmembers or aldermen. In some cases, a proposed ordinance will go to a small committee for review. Other times, the entire council may vote on it without a committee hearing. Proposed ordinances may be discussed at several meetings over a few months so that public comments may be heard.

Do your research

See Part Two of this guide for information on how to research puppy sources. For pet shop ordinances, research which pet stores in your area would be affected. Find out where those pet stores are getting their puppies and then research those breeders. Check the HSUS's Horrible Hundred reports and search online sources and social media sites for consumer complaints.

For outdoor sales ordinances, document where and when puppies are being sold, any troubling issues that the neighborhood is experiencing as a result (for example, animals that are not sold at flea markets being dumped after the market ends and ending up in local shelters or on the streets) and try to find out which breeders those puppies come from. For ordinances that will regulate puppy mills themselves, collect as much information as possible about the puppy mills in your town that caused you to be concerned about them in the first place and find state and/or USDA inspection reports, if available.

See humanesociety.org/puppymillresearch for fact sheets, reports and research that can help you make your case. It is crucial to provide lawmakers with this information so they understand the problem and the urgency. Your opponents will deny your claims, so be sure to have documentation to back up your statements, such as consumer lawsuits, inspection reports, transport documents, photos and/or vet records to document the animals' poor conditions.

Don't hesitate to reach out to the HSUS at stop-puppy-mills@humanesociety.org so we can offer you support.

Get community support

Supporting a local ordinance involves testifying at council meetings, contacting council members to express support for the ordinance and informing others about the ordinance. It takes dedication to see an ordinance through from beginning to end. Even in big cities, it can be common for very few people to get involved in local government, which means a small group of people are changing laws and policies. So getting active community support can make or break the legislation you are trying to pass.

A diverse coalition will show your elected officials that a significant portion of the community supports your efforts. Examples of people who you'll want involved in your project at some point (and who you may call upon to testify in support of your proposal) include:

- Animal advocates
- Reputable breeders
- Veterinarians and veterinary technicians
- Responsible dog owners

- Dog trainers and behaviorists
- Animal shelter workers and directors
- Citizens who have purchased ill dogs from pet stores
- Neighbors who live near "nuisance" kennels
- Animal control officers
- Health department inspectors
- Former pet store employees

Find a friend in office

Public officials tend to take their constituents' interests seriously, so try talking to your own council member or alderman first. As much as we'd like the people we vote for to agree with us, this may not always work. If your own council member isn't interested, don't despair. Try to find another official with an interest in animal issues and pitch your idea to them. Often, your local animal control bureau, HSUS state director, or local humane society can point you towards a sympathetic decision-maker.

Draft the ordinance

You may already know what you want your ordinance to say, but it will have to be crafted into an appropriate legislative format. Looking at successful ordinances that have already passed elsewhere can give you some ideas about what an ordinance should look like. Then, reach out to the HSUS (stop-puppy-mills@humanesociety.org) and we'll help draft language that is effective, legally sound and fits into the existing code in your locality. Here is some language that has been used successfully in some localities:

- Pet shop ordinance: A pet shop may offer for sale only those dogs and cats obtained from, or displayed in cooperation with, an animal care facility (i.e. shelters and animal control facilities) or animal rescue organization. Note: "animal rescue organization" should be narrowly defined to avoid sham rescue situations.

- Outdoor sales ban: It shall be unlawful for any person to sell, exchange, trade, barter, lease or display for a commercial purpose any dog or cat on any roadside, public right-of-way, parkway, median, park, other recreation area, flea market or other outdoor market, or commercial or retail parking lot regardless of whether such access is authorized (shelter/rescue adoption events are exempt).

- Basic Dog Care Standards: Missouri's Proposition B, the Puppy Mill Cruelty Prevention Act, remains one of the most clear and concise measures outlining basic humane care and conditions for dog breeding facilities. To keep it simple and understandable, the Act is only two pages long. Although the Act was later weakened by lawmakers, its original text can be found here: ballotpedia.org/Missouri_Dog_Breeding_Regulation,_Proposition_B_(2010).

Keep in mind that, although sample language is a great place to start, final language must be drafted that is specific to each locality because it must fit with the existing code and definitions.

Photo Credit: Kathy Milani

Go Public!

Local officials read local papers! Schedule a meeting with the editor or editorial board of your local paper to ask them to support your proposal. Contact other media outlets, including television and radio, to let them know about your efforts. Write letters to the editor of your local paper, remembering to state your case concisely (most papers prefer letters of 150-200 words).

Below are some sample letters to the editor.

Dear Editor:

The [recent outbreak of disease in pet store name] or [cost of local animal care and control efforts and number of animals euthanized] illustrates one of the major problems that result from bringing puppies from puppy mills into our community.

The majority of pet store puppies come from puppy mills. This is bad for dogs, and our community. Puppy mills are inhumane breeding facilities that produce puppies in large numbers. The breeding dogs at puppy mills often live their entire lives in cramped, dirty cages, and the poor conditions cause puppies to have more physical and behavioral problems than dogs from humane sources. Our town should not be supporting this cruelty. If [location] wants to reduce the cost to the public of sheltering animals and encourage best practices in the breeding and purchasing of dogs, then an ordinance should be passed to prohibit the sale of puppies in pet shops. This protects animals and consumers who often unknowingly support puppy mills and end up with sick and behaviorally challenged pet store puppies.

Dear Editor:

It's great to see that [location] is finally considering an ordinance that would ban the sale of puppies in pet shops unless they come from shelters or qualified rescues (article name, date of story). According to national animal welfare organizations, most pet shops sell puppies that were bred in terrible puppy mills..

Two to three million animals are euthanized in U.S. shelters each year, while about two million puppies are produced by puppy mills annually. By banning the sale of puppy mill puppies, [location] is moving in the right direction to create a more humane community.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS TEND TO TAKE THEIR CONSTITUENTS' INTERESTS SERIOUSLY, SO TRY TALKING TO YOUR OWN COUNCIL MEMBER OR ALDERMAN FIRST.

Photo Credit Michelle Riley

Photo Credit Michelle Riley

Testify

If your council calls a public meeting to discuss your proposal, you should testify and get members of your coalition to testify with you, especially individuals who will be in charge of enforcing the ordinance, such as animal control officers, if possible. Plan ahead of time to make sure that everyone doesn't speak on the exact same points (a common problem at public hearings). For example, it may be wasteful and frustrating for legislators to have a dozen people talk about the abuse and neglect in puppy mills without mentioning the taxpayer burden of animal care and control agencies that manage animal overpopulation issues day to day. Knowing how puppy mills impact communities all over the country—even when they are not in your backyard—is a very important point to communicate.

Be ready for the tough questions

When you testify or meet with lawmakers, be ready to answer questions about puppy mills (see some sample statistics on the last page of this booklet). You may also be asked some tough questions about motives and perceptions. Below are some examples and sample responses to help address some common concerns.

Will an ordinance banning the sale of commercially raised puppies in pet stores close down local businesses?

Ordinances are designed to require pet stores to obtain puppies and kittens from humane sources, not to put pet stores out of business. Pet stores that have converted to this humane model have been successful and have adopted out thousands of homeless animals that would have otherwise been euthanized. Pet stores can also choose to not sell puppies and kittens, but rather focus on supplies and services, as most of the largest and most successful pet store chains in the country (including PetSmart and Petco) do. Twenty-four of the top 25 pet store chains in North America already adhere to the humane model.

Don't some pet stores buy their puppies from "responsible breeders"?

Responsible breeders do not sell their puppies to pet stores. They want to know the people who are taking home their puppies and to make sure that their animals are well taken care of into the future. Responsible breeders will welcome you into their home and will gladly show you the conditions that their puppies are living in. That way, consumers can make sure that their new puppy is getting adequate care and socialization and the consumer knows they are not supporting a puppy mill. Ordinances that restrict the sale of puppies in pet stores actually encourage consumers to seek out responsible breeders.

Photo Credit Michelle Riley

Will a ban on the sale of commercially raised puppies in pet stores drive consumers to purchase pets online from even more substandard, unlicensed breeders?

There is no evidence that this is the case. Retail pet stores cater to two types of consumers: impulse buyers who are drawn to the "puppy in the window," and individuals and families who want to meet a puppy in person and interact with him before making a purchase decision. While some people do purchase pets online, ordinances encourage consumers to adopt from shelters and rescues or buy from reputable breeders—all of whom have dogs of every breed, size and age. Please note that breeders selling sight-unseen over the Internet are regulated in the exact same way as breeders selling to pet stores, as both are required to have a USDA license.

Why would a local government take away the public's right to buy a puppy from any place they want?

Local and state governments can legislate for the health and safety of their community, and have a duty to protect their constituents. Commercially bred dogs often live in horrendous conditions and suffer from an array of illnesses, often unknown by the consumer at the time of purchase. Some of the illnesses, such as parasites and infections, will travel into local communities and infect otherwise healthy pets, while others can be transmitted to humans. In October 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention alerted the public to a multistate outbreak of an antibiotic-resistant strain of Campylobacter bacteria that infected dozens of people, sending some to the hospital, that was linked to contact with pet store puppies. Beyond health issues, pet stores often mislead consumers about the source of the puppies and utilize predatory lending schemes. To ensure consumer protection and animal welfare, localities can pass laws restricting pet sales.

State and federal governments already regulate puppy mills. Why do we need to enact local legislation?

Unfortunately, federal and state laws do very little to protect animals in puppy mills, nor the pet store consumer. USDA standards are merely survival standards that still allow dogs to be kept in small, wire cages for their entire lives with very little care or attention. The USDA itself admits that it does not fully enforce these minimal standards of care, and USDA's inspection records show that even those who regularly violate the standards rarely have their licenses revoked. In states with puppy mill laws and/or pet store laws, we see similar enforcement problems. A local lawmaker can't shut down a puppy mill in a far-away state, and he or she can't force the USDA or their state to better regulate puppy mills or pet shops. What they can do is: 1) prevent puppy mill dogs from being trucked into their city when there are plenty of homeless animals already in shelters, and 2) protect their constituents from being misled into buying a puppy that will likely be sick or have behavioral problems.

More fact sheets can be found at humanesociety.org/puppymillresearch.

If you lose

You may not win your battle on the first time around, but don't give up. Maybe your council just wasn't ready for this particular issue at this time. However, now you have introduced them to the many ways in which puppy mills affect communities. Talk to those councilmembers who voted against your ordinance and find out why. You can learn from this experience and try to pass a better ordinance in the future.

If you win

If your measure was successful, you've achieved a great accomplishment, so be proud of all of your hard work. Unfortunately, passing an ordinance doesn't mean that it will be enacted as is, well-enforced, or will remain a part of local law forever. Whatever the situation, keep an eye out for related issues in your community after your ordinance has passed. Then plan to build on the momentum to push for strong enforcement and additional reforms. Also, keep an eye out for bills at the state level, pushed by the pet stores, which would prohibit localities from passing these ordinances. If you've had success passing local ordinances, consider taking the issue to the state, working to prohibit the sale of puppy mill puppies in pet stores.

Help is available

The Humane Society of the United States' Stop Puppy Mills Campaign has been directly involved in many of the local ordinances that have passed throughout the country. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us for help. Email stop-puppy-mills@humanesociety.org for more information on any of the ideas in this guide.

Photo courtesy of Nicole Rose Galvan

Photo courtesy of Rosemary Gordon

Photo courtesy of Sara Yassin

Photo Credit: Hollis Bennett

"THROUGH A COMPASSIONATE AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH, WE CAN CREATE A BETTER WORLD BOTH FOR THE ANIMALS AND FOR THE COMMUNITIES THEY LIVE IN."

— KITTY BLOCK

PUPPY MILL STATISTICS

10,000 ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PUPPY MILLS IN THE U.S. (BOTH LICENSED AND UNLICENSED)

2,000,000 ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PUPPIES PRODUCED BY PUPPY MILLS EACH YEAR

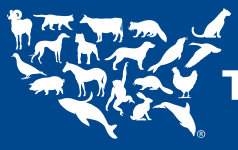
2-3 MILLION ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DOGS AND CATS EUTHANIZED BY SHELTERS EVERY YEAR IN THE U.S.

$4.00 - $7.00 INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION BUDGETING RECOMMENDATION, PER CAPITA, FOR ANIMAL CONTROL PROGRAMS.

$500,000 ESTIMATED COST OF A PUPPY MILL BUST INVOLVING 250 ANIMALS.

For additional fact sheets and research, see humanesociety.org/puppymillresearch.

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
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AN ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO STOPPING PUPPY MILLS