



# Spay and Neuter News



**Environmental Science 110**

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Puppy mills are breeding facilities that produce purebred puppies in large numbers. The puppies are sold either directly to the public via the Internet, newspaper ads, at the mill itself, or are sold to brokers and pet shops across the country. Puppy mills have long concerned The Humane Society of the United States.

The documented problems of puppy mills include overbreeding, inbreeding, minimal veterinary care, poor quality of food and shelter, lack of socialization with humans, overcrowded cages, and the killing of unwanted animals. To the unwitting consumer, this situation frequently means buying a puppy facing an array of immediate veterinary problems or harboring genetically borne diseases that do not appear until years later. In 1994, *Time* magazine estimated that as many as 25% of purebred dogs were afflicted with serious genetic problems.

Sadly, some dogs are forced to live in puppy mills for their entire lives. They are kept there for one reason only: to produce more puppies. Repeatedly bred, many of these "brood bitches" are killed once their reproductive capacity wanes.

Thousands of these breeding operations currently exist in the United States, many of them despite repeated violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is charged with enforcing the AWA; however, with 96 inspectors nationwide who oversee not only the thousands of puppy mills, but also zoos, circuses, laboratories, and animals transported via commercial airlines, they are an agency stretched thin.

The HSUS, along with other animal-protection groups, has successfully lobbied for increased funding for AWA enforcement. Although all 50 states have anti-cruelty laws that should prevent neglect and mistreatment of dogs in puppy mills, such laws are seldom enforced.

## **The Pet Store Link**

The HSUS strongly opposes the sale, through pet shops and similar outlets, of puppies and dogs from mass-breeding establishments. Puppy-mill dogs are the "inventory" of these retail operations. Statistics from the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) indicate that approximately 3,500 to 3,700 of the 11,500 to 12,000 U.S. pet stores sell cats and dogs. PIJAC also estimates that pet stores sell 300,000 to 400,000 puppies every year. The HSUS estimates the number to be 500,000.

Purebreed registration papers only state the recorded lineage of a dog. Accuracy of the reported lineage cannot be guaranteed. The American Kennel Club (AKC), the most widely recognized purebred dog registry, readily notes that it "is not itself involved in the sale of dogs and cannot therefore guarantee the health and quality of dogs in its registry." Clearly, it is "buyer beware."

## ***DOG* definitions**

It's deceptively easy to say that John Jones or Mary Smith runs a puppy mill or that pet store puppies come from puppy mills, but the label is tossed about so frequently and with so little regard for accuracy that each prospective dog owner should ascertain for himself whether or not he wishes to buy a dog from John Jones, Mary Smith, a pet store, or a hobby breeder. Here are our *Dog Owner's Guide* definitions to help you decide:

**Hobby breeder:** A breed fancier who has a breed or two (or even three); follows a breeding plan to preserve and protect each breed; produces a limited number of litters each year; breeds only when a litter will enhance the breed and the breeding program; raises the puppies with plenty of environmental stimulation and human contact; has a contract that protects breeder, puppy, and buyer; raises dog in the house or runs a small, clean kennel; screens breeding stock to eliminate hereditary defects; works with a breed club or kennel club to promote and protect the breed; and cares that each and every puppy is placed in the best home possible.

**Commercial breeder:** One who usually has several breeds of dogs with profit as the primary motive for existence. Commercial breeders that are inspected by USDA, state agencies, or the American Kennel Club should have adequate conditions. Commercial breeders that sell directly to the public fall through the regulatory cracks unless they do business in a state that licenses commercial kennels. Dogs in these kennels may be healthy or not and their conditions may be acceptable or not. The dogs are probably not screened for genetic diseases, and the breeding stock may or may not be selected for resemblance to the breed standard or for good temperament.

**Broker:** One who buys puppies from commercial kennels and sells to retail outlets or other kennels. Brokers ship puppies on airlines or by truckload throughout the country. Brokers must be licensed by USDA and must abide by the shipping regulations in the Animal Welfare Act.

**Buncher:** One who collects dogs of unknown origin for sale to laboratories or other bunchers or brokers. Bunchers are considered lower on the evolutionary scale than puppy mill operators, for there is much suspicion that they buy stolen pets, collect pets advertised as "Free to a good home," and adopt unwanted pets from animal shelters for sale to research laboratories. USDA licenses and inspects bunchers to make sure that they abide by the AWA.

**Amateur breeder:** A dog owner whose pet either gets bred by accident or who breeds on purpose for a variety of reasons. This breeder may be ignorant of the breed standard, genetics, behavior, and good health practices. An amateur breeder can very easily become a hobby breeder or a commercial breeder, depending on his level of interest or need for income.

**A real puppy mill:** A breeder who produces puppies with no breeding program, little attention to puppy placement, and poor health and socialization practices. Conditions in puppy mills are generally substandard and may be deplorable, and puppies and adult dogs may be malnourished, sickly, and of poor temperament.

## **What You Can Do**

To close down [puppy mills](#) and ensure the safety and humane treatment of dogs trapped in commercial kennels, you can:

- Encourage state and federal officials to stop the mass production and exportation of sick and traumatized dogs. In addition to passing new laws, legislators can demand that existing laws be enforced.
  - [Urge other people](#) not to buy puppies from pet stores, over the Internet, or from newspaper ads.
  - Write letters to the editor about puppy mills and pet stores. Explain the mills' inhumane treatment of puppies and their contribution to pet overpopulation.
  - Visit a local pet store to determine where it obtains its puppies. Don't be misled by claims that its dogs were not bred in puppy mills. Insist on seeing breed registry papers or the interstate health certificate for each puppy. The papers will list the breeder's and/or wholesaler's name and address.
  - Contact your member of the U.S. House of Representatives and your two U.S. Senators, asking them to urge the USDA to strictly enforce the Animal Welfare Act and to support efforts to increase funding for USDA/Animal Care. Members of Congress can be contacted at: The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC 20510.
- File a [Breeder Complaint Form](#) if your new puppy appears to be suffering from a medical condition.

## *10 Reasons to Spay/Neuter Your Pet*

### **1. YOUR FEMALE DOG OR CAT WILL LIVE A LONGER, HEALTHIER LIFE.**

Spaying—the removal of the ovaries and uterus—is a veterinary procedure performed under general anesthesia that usually requires minimal hospitalization. Spaying a female cat or dog helps prevent pyometra (pus-filled uterus) and breast cancer. Treatment of pyometra requires hospitalization, intravenous fluids and antibiotics. Breast cancer can be fatal in about 50 percent of female dogs and in 90 percent of female cats. Spaying your pet before her first heat offers the best protection from these diseases.

### **2. THERE ARE MAJOR HEALTH BENEFITS FOR YOUR MALE ANIMAL COMPANION, TOO.**

Besides preventing unwanted litters, neutering your male dog or cat—the surgical removal of the testicles—prevents testicular cancer, if done before six months of age.

### **3. YOUR SPAYED FEMALE WON'T GO INTO HEAT.**

While cycles can vary greatly, female felines usually go into heat four to five days every three weeks during breeding season. In an effort to advertise for mates, they'll yowl and urinate more frequently—sometimes all over the house. Unspayed female dogs generally have a bloody discharge for about a week, and can conceive for another week or so.

### **4. YOUR MALE DOG WON'T NEED TO ROAM AWAY FROM HOME...**

An intact male in search of a mate will do just about anything to get one! That includes digging his way under the fence and making like Houdini to escape from the house. And once he's free to roam, he risks injury in traffic and fights with other males.

### **5. ...AND HE WILL BE MUCH BETTER BEHAVED TO BOOT!**

Neutered cats and dogs focus their attention on their human families. On the other hand, unneutered dogs and cats may mark their territory by spraying strong-smelling urine all over the house. Indoors, male dogs may embarrass you by mounting on furniture and human legs when stimulated. And FYI, a neutered dog protects his home and family just as well as unneutered dog--and many aggression problems can be avoided by early neutering.

### **6. SPAYING OR NEUTERING WILL NOT MAKE YOUR PET FAT.**

It's no use to use that old excuse! Lack of exercise and overfeeding will cause your pet to pack on the extra pounds—not neutering. Your pet will remain fit and trim as long as you continue to provide exercise and monitor food intake.

### **7. SPAYING OR NEUTERING IS HIGHLY COST-EFFECTIVE.**

The cost of your pet's spay or neuter surgery is a lot less than the cost of having and caring for a litter. It also beats the cost of treatment when your unneutered tom escapes and gets into fights with neighborhood strays...or the cost of cleaning the carpet that your unspayed female keeps mistaking for her litter box, or the cost of...well, you get the idea!

### **8. IT'S GOOD FOR THE COMMUNITY.**

Stray animals pose real problems in many parts of the country. They can prey on wildlife, cause vehicular accidents, damage the local fauna and scare children.

### **9. YOUR PET DOESN'T NEED TO HAVE A LITTER FOR YOUR CHILDREN TO WITNESS THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH.**

We've heard this one a lot. But you know what? Letting your pet produce offspring you have no intention of keeping teaches your children irresponsibility. Anyone who has seen an animal euthanized in a shelter for lack of a home knows the truth behind this dangerous myth. There are countless books and videos available to teach your children about birth in a responsible manner.

### **10. IT PACKS A POWERFUL PUNCH IN THE FIGHT AGAINST PET OVERPOPULATION.**

**Millions of cats and dogs of all ages and breeds are euthanized annually or suffer as strays. These high numbers are the result of unwanted, unplanned litters that could have been prevented by spaying or neutering.**

## *Fast Facts: Pet Overpopulation in the United States*

It is impossible to determine how many stray dogs and cats live in the United States; estimates for cats alone range up to 70 million.

The average number of litters a fertile cat produces is one to two a year; average number of kittens is 4-6 per litter.

The average number of litters a fertile dog produces is one a year; average number of puppies is 4-6.

Owned cats and dogs generally live longer, healthier lives than strays.

Most strays are lost pets who were not kept properly indoors or provided with identification.

Only ten percent of the animals received by shelters have been spayed or neutered. About 75 percent of owned pets are neutered.

The cost of spaying or neutering a pet is less than the cost of raising puppies or kittens for a year.

Five out of ten dogs in shelters and seven out of ten cats in shelters are destroyed simply because there is no one to adopt them.

Feral Cats have no natural predators, and reek havoc on the ecosystems they are introduced to: Ecosystems cannot support the burden created by the overpopulation of abandoned dogs and cats.

Domestic cats should not be allowed to prowl outside, where they have the opportunity to hunt songbirds, rabbits, and other small mammals.

Although cats retain their hunting instincts, there is no natural need to them to hunt. True predators in the wild only kill what they will eat, whereas a cat kills for play, not always eating what catches. The number of wild predators in relation to the number of species is kept in check by numerous natural controls such as weather, availability of food, mates, and other predators. Domestic cats upset balance. A well-fed house cat doesn't need to hunt to survive, yet cats kill untold numbers of wild animals while being almost wholly unaffected by the natural controls on numbers.