

Pennsylvania Pet Stores Continue Selling Dogs from Puppy Mills Despite COVID-19 Crisis

Pet retail facilities taking advantage of “essential services” designation and using it to peddle unhealthy dogs to unsuspecting consumers

LANCASTER , PA, UNITED STATES, April 24, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Animal Wellness Action, a national animal protection group promoting legal standards against cruelty, conducted a survey, conducted between April 13-20th, of nearly 40 stores in Pennsylvania that sell dogs obtained from puppy mills and found that 30 percent of stores have been selling dogs during the COVID-19 crisis. Animal Wellness [sent a letter to Governor Tom Wolf](#), urging him to clarify that the sale of puppies from puppy mills is not an essential service, halt the transport of puppies for retail sale in the state, strengthen laws and regulations to protect dogs and consumers, and increase enforcement of the current law. Rather than buy puppies from a pet store, the public should be encouraged to adopt an animal from a shelter or rescue instead.

Nearly all puppies sold in pet stores come from puppy mills -- large, commercial dog breeding operations that sell dogs at stores and over the internet. Hundreds of puppy mills operate within Pennsylvania, and thousands of puppies are

transported into the state each year from puppy mills located in the Midwest, despite a pullback on business activities to encourage social distancing during the crisis. While pet supply stores have been deemed essential, that designation was almost certainly driven by the need to

provide food and other goods for proper pet care and not as a means to continue a live-animal sales activity that undermines animal welfare.

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Michele Patterson, national puppy mill committee chair for AWA

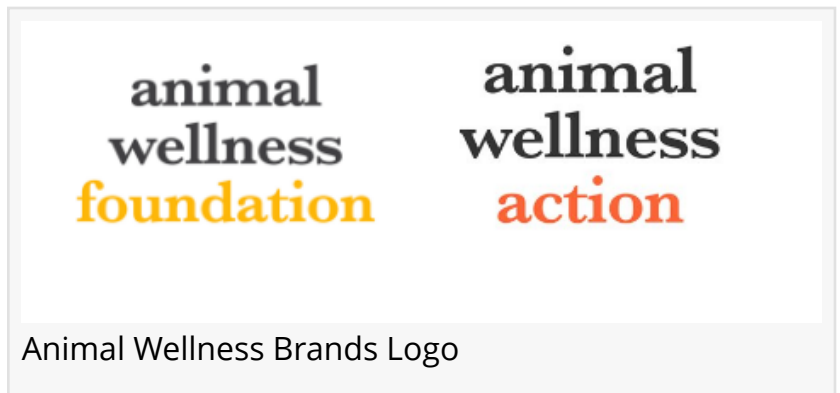
“We agree pet supply stores are essential, but only for the sale of food and other necessities for our pets, not for the purpose of continuing the trade in inhumanely produced, often sick animals,” said Michele Patterson, national puppy mill committee chair for Animal Wellness Action and a resident of Lancaster County. “Given that Pennsylvania has often referred to as the ‘Puppy Mill Capital’ of the east coast, we must be especially vigilant and prevent the industry from doing more harm to dogs and consumers.”

Current federal and state standards for the care of mother dogs kept in mills are barely adequate for survival, loopholes allow violators to continue



Photo Credit: Jennifer Skiff (3)

renewing their licenses, and fail to adequately address the fraud and deception of puppy mills. Puppies often become sick due to the poor breeding, unsanitary conditions of mills, and long-distance transport to pet stores. Families are devastated after their new puppy dies of illness, and according to a 2019 CDC investigation, the ill puppies have passed dangerous diseases onto people, such as campylobacter, a bacterial infection.



While Pennsylvania has made some progress in regulating puppy mills, major gaps in the law still exist. AWA and other groups support Victoria's Law, introduced by State Senators Tom Killion (R-9) and Andrew Dinniman (D-19), to ban the sale of puppy mill dogs in pet stores. Over 300 localities across the nation have adopted legislation restricting the sale of puppies in pet stores, and numerous state legislatures are taking up the issue.

In Congress, the PetFax Act (H.R. 5715), recently introduced by U.S. Reps. Charlie Crist (D-FL) and Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA) – and modeled after CarFax reports -- would mandate honesty and transparency in the sales of dogs and cats. It would require that sellers of dogs and cats disclose certain information to a customer about the animals, including information identifying the dealer who bred the animals, the number of dogs and cats bred and sold by that dealer over the past two years, a listing of any violations the dealer has had in the past two years, and health information about the animals.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

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