



Combating puppy and kitten mills through local legislation

For every commercially bred puppy or kitten purchased from a breeder or retailer, there is a pet in a shelter, wishing for a home. Every day, more than 9,000 pets are killed in shelters across the country simply because they don't have safe places to call home, while pet mills continue to churn out animals for the pet trade. But people like you are helping jurisdictions throughout the country break this cycle, saving lives and taxpayer dollars by enacting local ordinances to fight the cruelty of puppy and kitten mills. Several types of legislation help stop mills from flourishing.

Animal protection at the source

Breeding regulation laws requires breeder licensing and inspections and creates or improves minimum standards of care for the animals. This type of legislation is effective because inspections mean pet mill owners are held accountable to certain standards, and pet mills are less profitable when more money is invested in the care of the animals.

Consumer protection

Pet store disclosure bills require stores to post the animals' health records, along with the name and location of the breeder, so that customers can see where the pets for sale were bred. On the USDA website, customers can view information about the breeder, including inspection history, violations and number of animals on-site, allowing consumers to make more informed decisions about whether they should purchase the pets.

Pet lemon laws offer better protection for consumers and greater recourse for buyers of sick pets. As with breeding regulations, these laws increase the costs of doing business for mill-supplied pet stores by requiring them to provide warranties.

Pet sales bans

Bans on the sale of animals in public places — such as highways, parking lots and flea markets — help protect pets, purchasers and the community. Public places are common venues for the sale of animals from mills and backyard breeders, and the pets being sold are usually underage, frequently ill, and not fixed or vaccinated (a public health concern), with no accountability on the part of the seller. Many are purchased impulsively and end up surrendered to shelters when the cost of caring for them becomes unmanageable.

Retail pet sales bans prohibit the sale of dogs and cats in pet stores, unless the animals come from shelters or rescue groups. More than 50 jurisdictions in the U.S. have enacted these ordinances, and many more are in the works. Legislation that focuses on restricting animal sales is effective because it addresses the problem of mills and backyard breeders from the retail end, the point of sale. Restricting the market for puppies and kittens from mills limits motivation to produce them.

Because the retail pet sales ordinances include an exemption for pet stores that offer animals for adoption from shelters or rescue groups, it's a win-win for the animals and the community. Not only are stores no longer supporting pet mills, they're helping to relieve the burden on shelters by getting animals into pet stores where they can be seen by potential adopters.

Best Friends, other animal welfare groups, local activists and concerned individuals are working with lawmakers around the country to improve the lives of animals in their communities. These efforts are having a profound effect on the fight against puppy and kitten mills. Please join us. Working together, we can Save Them All®.

For more information, visit puppymills.bestfriends.org or contact puppymillinitiatives@bestfriends.org.