

## Pet Store Activism

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

### Identify the Breeders

- In most states, stores are not required to give out information identifying their breeders, so be calm and polite rather than demanding. Visit the store during one of their quieter times of day. Spend some time looking around, then discretely 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. Ask for the name and general location of the breeder.
- Write down the name, city and state of the breeder(s) you have identified.

### Do Your Research

- Find out if the breeder(s) are licensed with the United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal Care Division. Call the USDA/APHIS headquarters for assistance at (301) 734-7833. Contact The HSUS if you need further help.
- Acquire inspection reports on the breeders. The USDA publishes some inspection reports on their website, but only a few. You can submit a Freedom of Information Act request to find out more. Requests can be faxed to USDA/APHIS at 301-734-5941. Contact The HSUS if you need further help.
- If the breeders you have identified are not licensed with the USDA, find out if they are licensed and inspected by your state. In some states, the state Department of Agriculture inspects kennels or breeders. In states such as PA and MO that have such programs, you may be able to request copies of the state inspection reports in addition to the USDA’s.
- Do an Internet search to find out more about the breeders or store.
- Contact 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. If you represent an organization, you may want to talk with your local shelter and see if they are willing to refer complainants to you. Ask complainants to fill out the Breeder Complaint Form on [www.humanesociety.org/pupppymills](http://www.humanesociety.org/pupppymills) 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 large-scale commercial breeders while claiming that they do not sell puppy mill dogs? Do you have inspection reports on some of the breeders indicating multiple 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.
- Send a copy of your research to: The Humane Society of the United States, Attn: Puppy Mills, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037.