

The Basic Facts about Puppy Mills: “Puppy Massacre” is not an Overstatement

By Susan Chana Lask, Esq.

©2012, all rights reserved by Susan Chana Lask

In a country already suffering from an over population of dogs, cats and other companion animals, there are nearly six thousand commercial kennels or “puppy mills” in the United States licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture perpetuating the problem.¹ Approximately four million dogs are bred in puppy mills annually and an estimated four to five million die every year (almost 11,000 daily).² Causes of death include but are not limited to, neglect and starvation, untreated illnesses, and lack of heat or air conditioning in puppy mills.³ The conditions in puppy mills are downright atrocious and inhumane. Dogs are forced to live in very small cages or enclosures, often with several others. The conditions of the enclosures are often unsanitary. Female dogs housed in puppy mills are bred as frequently as possible and the puppies are taken away from their mothers prematurely.⁴ The result is an unhealthy and genetically defective puppy who suffers and millions of dollars in profits go to the cruel and careless individuals who own and operate puppy mills. According to the Humane Society of the United States, although laws exist regulating puppy mills,⁵ there are inefficiencies in the system.⁶

The numbers supporting the cruelty are staggering as the following chart shows.

Number of Puppy Mills in the United States	Number of Dogs Housed in Puppy Mills	Annual Number of Dogs Killed in Puppy Mills	Manner of Death
6,000 USDA-licensed commercial kennels in the U.S. (and untold numbers of unlicensed.)	An estimated 4 Million dogs are bred in puppy mills every year	4-5 Million animals die in shelters every year (roughly 11,000 every day.)	No heat or air conditioning in a puppy mill (Dogs freeze in the winter and die of heat stroke in the summer) Untreated Illness Neglect and Starvation

¹ *Puppy Mill Information*, PUPPY MILL AWARENESS DAY, http://www.awarenessday.org/national/pm_info.html. (last visited Feb. 22, 2012).

² *Id.*

³ Sharon Seltzer, *Illegal Dumping of Dead Dogs – The Latest Puppy Mill Atrocity*, CARE2 MAKE A DIFFERENCE (Oct. 28, 2010) <http://www.care2.com/causes/illegal-dumping-of-dead-dogs-the-latest-puppy-mill-atrocity.html>.

⁴ Sharyn Slant, *PUPPY MILLS, The Sad Truth: Facts and Statistics*, <http://sharynsslant.hubpages.com/hub/P-U-P-P-Y-M-I-L-L-S-F-a-c-t-s-A-n-d-S-t-a-t-i-s-t-i-c-s> (last visited Feb. 22, 2012).

⁵ *See*, U.S. Animal Welfare Act, 7 U.S.C. §§ 2131 – 59 (2006). The Act is enforced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and requires minimum standards of care for dogs and other animals bred for commercial resale and profit. The Act only applies to “wholesale operations” and not direct sales to the public.

⁶ *Puppy Mills, Learn More about this Cycle of Cruelty*, HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE U.S. (Jun. 8, 2010), www.Humanesociety.org/issues/puppy-mills/qa/puppy_mill_FAQs.html#Are_there_any_federal_laws_that_regulate.

Puppy mills are notorious for dumping their dead puppies, or stock piling massive graves without a license to do so. Under New York law, puppy mills are committing state legal violations. The New York State, Division of Licensing Services oversees the operation of a pet cemetery or crematorium. New York's General Business Law, Article 35-C, § 750-b ("License Required") provides that "no person shall engage for a fee in the business of operating a pet cemetery or pet crematorium or hold himself or herself out as being able so to do unless he or she is licensed therefor pursuant to this article."⁷ Furthermore, § 750-k ("Violations and Penalties") of the statute provides:

Any person not licensed pursuant to this article who shall directly or indirectly engage in the business of operating a pet cemetery or pet crematorium . . . shall for the first offense be guilty of a violation and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$500 or by imprisonment for a term of not more than 15 days, or by both such fine and imprisonment.⁸

Although the penalties for violations are minor, local authorities need to step up and enforce the laws to ensure that puppy mills pay the price for any illegal activity. The United States is experiencing an over population of pets or companion animals, and puppy mills are the problem as they not only abuse the creatures we love, they also over breed them causing serious population issues.

**The assistance of Law Student Brett Burnbaum to this article is greatly appreciated.

⁷ N.Y. GEN. BUS. LAW, § 750-b (McKinney 2011).

⁸ N.Y. GEN. BUS. LAW, § 750-k (McKinney 2011).