

Puppy Mills

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Definition

There is no legal definition of the term “puppy mill.” However, it can be described as a large-scale commercial dog breeding operation where profit is given a higher priority than the well-being of the dogs. The health of the dogs is disregarded in order to maintain a low overhead and maximize profits. Veterinary care, nutrition, socialization, integrity of the breed/breed standard and sanitation are substandard in comparison to responsible breeders, who place the utmost importance on these aspects of husbandry. Illness, diseases, fearful behavior, and lack of socialization with humans and other animals are not uncommon characteristics of dogs from puppy mills. Breeding is performed without consideration for maintenance of genetic quality/breed standards, resulting in the passage of hereditary conditions and diseases from generation to generation. Female dogs are bred at every opportunity with little to no recovery time between litters, until they are no longer physically able to reproduce. Puppies are typically sold through pet shops and marketed as young as 8 weeks of age. The accuracy of their pedigree and purebred status is sometimes questionable (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals).

Conditions inside puppy mills have been documented for decades, with some of the most appalling scenes including dogs that are emaciated and near death from malnourishment, and dogs suffering from a variety of health issues ranging from Parvovirus to heartworm and flea, tick, and parasite infestations to severe dental disease that has led to rotting teeth and jaws (Prisoners of Greed). Dogs are housed in extremely small enclosures, where they live out their entire lives. Under current US law, an average sized Beagle could legally live out his entire life in a cage about the size of an average dishwasher (Mainline Animal Rescue).