Companion Animals

Puppy Mill Offensive

Rescues of dogs from the nauseating squalor of puppy mills are scenes of both horror and hope. In 2008, we saved more than 2,000 adult dogs and their offspring from mass-breeding facilities in Indiana, Quebec, Tennessee, and West Virginia, and helped to place all of them in new, loving homes.

An eight-month investigation of Petland, Inc., the nation's biggest retailer of puppy mill dogs, refuted the company's claims that it buys only from reputable breeders. HSUS investigators visited 21 of Petland's 140 stores and 35 of its suppliers. We also researched health certificates for more than 17,000 animals, tracing the origins of dogs sent to 76 different Petland stores and demonstrating that many of the chain's outlets are supplied by puppy mills.

The HSUS was also instrumental in the passage of a congressional bill banning imports of puppies younger than 6 months from foreign breeders, and we successfully pushed for tougher laws to regulate the puppy mill industry in Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. This compelling issue garnered national attention when Oprah Winfrey twice featured puppy factories on her daily show. HSUS President and CEO Wayne Pacelle appeared as a guest expert on the first show, an hour-long exposé that featured extensive HSUS video footage of puppy mill busts. Learn more at *humanesociety.org/stoppuppymills.*

Stephanie Shain, Senior Director, Stop Puppy Mills Campaign

Scenes from a Raid

HSUS staff regularly witness animal abuse at its worst. In December, Scotlund Haisley, HSUS senior director of Emergency Services, and public information officer Jordan Crump reported on the raid of a Quebec puppy mill—a dilapidated, unheated facility with nearly 100 dogs. The following excerpt offers a glimpse of the conditions field personnel often confront.

We knocked down the door of the worst of three Canadian puppy mills we have raided in the past three months. As soon as we entered the premises, our eyes began to well up from the overpowering stench of ammonia and the emotion of the scene that lay before us.

The ammonia was a result of urine collecting for months or years in uncleaned cages. Not only did the vapors make breathing nearly impossible, but over time standing in pools of acidic urine ate away at the dogs' sensitive paws. Many dogs had suffered from acid burns so severe that the bottoms of their cages were covered in blood.

The painful burns were not the only untreated medical ailment the dogs were forced to endure. At least half of them suffered from debilitating matting. One small grey schnauzer's coat had matted so tightly around his neck and chest that his breathing was severely restricted. He was nearly mummified in a casket of feces-laden fur. His relief increased with each layer of excess fur that our team removed. Without our intervention this dog would likely have died from something as basic as lack of grooming.

While walking through the rows of filthy, decades-old wire hutches, we imagined the suffering that had passed there over the years. We could almost see the ghosts lingering behind in several empty cages choked with cobwebs and dust. But now the once inescapable cages lay empty, and all of the dogs are resting comfortably at our emergency shelter.

It may take days of intensive veterinary care, weeks of pampering, and months of socialization, but we know that these dogs are now on the road to the life they were always meant to live. Not a life behind wire, but a life of green grass, warm beds, and the loving embrace of compassion.

Puppy mills treat animals like a cash crop.

Led by senior director of Emergency Services Scotlund Haisley (above), HSUS teams staged 40 deployments—an average of one every nine days—to rescue 12,528 animals from animal fights, puppy mills, hoarding cases, and natural disasters, including tornadoes in Arkansas and Tennessee, wildfires in California, floods in Missouri and Iowa, and Hurricanes Gustav and Ike on the Louisiana and Texas Gulf coasts. Visit *humanesociety.org/emergency* for updates.