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# Puppy Mill Brokers

The Humane Society of the United States

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**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

## Puppy Mill Brokers

A puppy mill “broker” is a pet dealer engaged in the business of re-selling puppies who were bred elsewhere. Unlike retail pet stores, brokers are middleman dealers who obtain puppies from breeders and puppy mills, and then transport and re-sell them. Brokers typically sell puppies to pet stores, but sometimes to research facilities, often travelling great distances to do so. In some cases the term is also used loosely to describe people who re-sell litters directly to the public that they themselves did not produce, for example, by posing as the original breeder and selling them through websites or classified ads.

Pet brokers who sell to pet stores or other dealers are required to obtain a Class B dealer license from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Class B license requires the brokers to abide by certain minimum standards of humane care and handling. It also requires them to carefully track the sources of their animals. However, many brokers routinely violate these rules. In addition, the health impacts of overcrowding, filthy conditions, and lack of basic veterinary oversight at puppy mills are only exacerbated when healthy animals from some breeders are mixed in with infectious animals from problem breeders on crowded trucks while transported long distances by brokers.

When addressing the accountability of pet stores or examining the sources of their puppies, it is imperative that we understand how most pet store puppies are sourced. The majority are sourced from brokers, not breeders.

### Quick Facts about Puppy Brokers

- An HSUS review of records for more than 6,700 puppies shipped to pet stores between 2009 and 2012 found that **more than two thirds of the puppies were shipped by brokers, not breeders.**
- Nationwide, there are approximately 821 USDA-licensed pet brokers, and 2,356 USDA-licensed breeders<sup>1</sup>
- The largest puppy broker in the country is believed to be The Hunte Corporation, based in Goodman, Missouri. This multi-million dollar company is believed to ship approximately 80,000 puppies per year to pet stores nationwide.
- The use of puppy mill brokers often makes it difficult if not impossible for the public to know who a puppy’s breeder actually was, as many pet stores will only disclose the broker information, if they provide any information at all.
- Many “B” dealers are also breeders. Some of the most notorious puppy mills in the country, including Kathy Bauck (Puppies on Wheels, MN), Jeff Fortin (KS), and Wanda Kretzman (Clearwater Kennel, MN) all have/had B licenses but also had hundreds of breeding dogs. Significant problems at these facilities resulted in Bauck’s conviction on animal cruelty charges in 2009, the deaths of 1,200 dogs at Fortin’s facility after an outbreak of canine distemper in 2010, and continued repeat AWA violations at Kretzman’s facility, which is currently still operating as of December 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> USDA, Dec. 2012

- HSUS research into the sources of more than 15,000 puppies sent to 126 Petland, Inc. stores from 2007 through 2009 found that a majority of the stores - 87 in all - were purchasing some or all of their puppies from The Hunte Corporation. Others were purchasing from additional brokers, such as Lambriar, Mid-America Pet, Clearwater Kennel, and others.
- A review of USDA inspection reports linked to brokers found that a number of brokers have repeat violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act, including violations for sick puppies who were not treated by a vet, overcrowding, undersized cages, unsafe temperatures, the purchase of underage puppies, the purchase of puppies from unlicensed breeders, and unsafe transport vehicles.



Clearwater Kennel, a USDA Class B licensed facility in Minnesota, is estimated to house more than 900 dogs. The kennel is licensed to re-sell dogs produced by other breeders as well as dogs bred on site. Federal inspectors have cited Clearwater Kennel repeatedly for numerous animal care violations. – HSUS, 2008