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# Petland Investigation Report

The Humane Society of the United States

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# Petland Investigation Report

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## INVESTIGATION SUMMARY

America's largest chain of puppy-selling pet stores, Petland Inc., is also the nation's largest retail supporter of puppy mills. There are more than 200 Petland stores worldwide, with about 140 in the U.S. Collectively, these stores sell tens of thousands of puppies each year.

On November 20, 2008 The Humane Society of the United States (The HSUS) revealed the results of a shocking eight-month investigation of Petland stores. The investigation reveals that Petland stores across the country have marketed puppy-mill puppies to unsuspecting consumers.

### *About the investigation:*

- HSUS investigators documented the sources of puppies sold to 76 different Petland stores. They visited 21 of the stores, including stores in Florida, Indiana, Minnesota, Nevada, and Ohio.
- HSUS investigators visited 35 breeders and brokers (re-sellers) linked to Petland stores, including breeders in Kansas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, and Missouri.
- Investigators researched health certificate import records of 322 breeders and brokers and almost 17,000 individual puppies linked to Petland stores.
- Investigators reviewed more than 100 state and federal inspection reports of breeders and brokers linked to Petland stores.

## INVESTIGATION RESULTS

The investigation revealed that:

- Despite assurances by staff at Petland stores visited by The HSUS and on Petland's corporate website that the company knows its breeders and deals only with those who have "the highest standards of pet care," many of the puppies sold at Petland stores come from massive commercial breeders in Missouri and other Midwestern puppy-mill states, where hundreds of breeding dogs are packed into cramped, barren cages.
- When HSUS investigators visited 35 of the large-scale breeding operations linked to Petland stores, they witnessed puppy mills – places where puppies are factory farmed in large numbers. At many of the facilities, investigators saw appalling conditions: puppies living in filthy, barren cages reeking of urine, with inadequate care and socialization.
- Many of the puppies for sale at stores visited by The HSUS were not even supplied directly by breeders, but were purchased from a "middle man" – large-scale "pet distributors," otherwise known as brokers. The investigation revealed that many of Petland's brokers also buy from puppy mills.
- Some of Petland's puppies were ordered online using a pet auction website called the Pet Board of Trade (PBT), demonstrating that many Petland stores are not screening breeders as the Petland corporate website claims – in fact, in some cases they may not even know the breeder's name until after the purchase is complete.



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- One of the most common sales pitches made by staff at Petland stores visited by The HSUS is that they use "USDA licensed" breeders. However, HSUS investigators reviewed USDA and state inspection reports for more than 100 of Petland's breeders, and found that more than 60 percent of the reports listed serious violations of basic animal care regulations. It is clear that Petland isn't reviewing these publicly-available records to ensure that their breeders employ "the highest standards of pet care."
- Documented USDA violations at some of Petland's breeders and suppliers included: dirty, broken-down enclosures; inadequate shelter from the cold; dogs kept in too-small cages; and inadequate veterinary care. Some of the breeders were found with sick or dead dogs left in their cages.
- The investigation also uncovered dubious aspects of Petland's "Adopt-a-Pet" program, proving that many of their "Adopt-a-Pet" animals are actually Petland's own puppies who did not sell at full price. During the investigation, The HSUS called all 133 Petland stores operating at that time in the U.S. We asked each store if they participated in the "Adopt-A-Pet" program – and if so, where the adoptable dogs come from. Fifty-six of the stores said they didn't participate in the Adopt-a-Pet program at all, 23 stores said they offered cut-rate "adoption" prices on older puppies that had not sold yet, 16 said they offered puppies for adoption when the animals were returned by previous customers, and 7 stores said they wanted to offer homeless dogs for adoption but they couldn't get a supply of pups from local shelters.

## PETLAND BACKGROUND

Petland is a privately held corporation with a corporate headquarters in Chillicothe, Ohio. The business was started in by Edward R. Kunzelman (now the current CEO) in 1967. In the 1970s, Petland began franchising stores. Today more than 90% of Petland stores are franchised.

Petland corporate-owned stores are located in: Amherst, Chillicothe, Cincinnati/Fairfield, Hilliard, Cleveland Heights, Lewis Center, and Columbus Town & Country, all in Ohio.

Currently there are 200 Petland stores open worldwide, though this number changes frequently as stores shut down and others open. Up-to-date information can be found at: <http://www.petland.com/> (click on "Find Petland Stores").

During the investigation, the Petland chain (as of 10-9-2008) included 137 U.S. stores in 29 states:

AL: 1	LA: 1	NV: 3	WV: 3
AZ: 2	ME: 1	NY: 1	
CA: 1	MI: 4	OH: 28	
FL: 21	MN: 2	PA: 5	
GA: 9	MO: 4	SC: 1	
IA: 2	MS: 1	TN: 1	



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IL: 16	NC: 1	TX: 12
IN: 3	NE: 1	VA: 3
KS: 3	NH: 1	WA: 1
KY: 1	NM: 1	WI: 3

The HSUS investigated only Petland puppies bought and sold in the U.S. During the time of the investigation, Petland had 43 stores outside of the U.S:

Canada: 31  
Chile: 4  
Japan: 5  
South Africa: 2  
China: 1

## PETLAND “ADOPT-A-PET” INVESTIGATION

The Petland website states the following about the "Adopt-A-Pet" program:

***What is Adopt-A-Pet?***

*Petland Pet Counselors work with staff at local animal shelters, pet rescue groups and with members of the local community to place homeless pets - puppies, dogs, kittens, cats and a variety of small animals. As part of this cooperative program, Petland store operators make available their highly visible Petland display windows to aid in the placement of homeless pets in local communities.*

To determine how and where Petland gets dogs for its "Adopt –A-Pet" program, HSUS investigators called every U.S. Petland store (those open for business on 9-10-2008) and asked whether the store participates. If we were told the store does participate, we asked where the "Adopt-A-Pet" dogs come from. Of 133 stores, 56 (42%) stated they do not participate in the program at all.

Many stores who said they do have adoptable dogs told us their "Adopt-A-Pets" come from a combination of sources. For example, the Tampa North store told us it occasionally sells pups from accidental litters that are brought in, and that occasionally they will get a dog from a local shelter or sell dogs given to them by people in the local community. The breakdown of responses is as follows, and again, some stores listed more than one source for "Adopt –A-Pet" dogs:

- 56 stores: do not participate at all
- 23 stores: older pups that don't sell within a few weeks are marked down in price and considered "adoptions"
- 25 stores: local litters, sometimes accidental, brought in from the local community
- 16 stores: returns to store – pups given back to the store where purchased and sold again
- 24 stores: give-ups to Petland rather than shelter – dogs brought in by local people



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- 7 stores: local shelter declined to work with Petland store – the store says it tried, but local shelters don't want to give them dogs. [Note: Some shelters have declined to work with Petland because they feel that Petland's practices conflict with their mission of reducing pet overpopulation and that the public can still visit their shelter to adopt the animals.]
- 25 stores: say they do acquire dogs from local shelter(s) or rescue
- 10 stores: say they do occasionally refer customers to local shelter/rescue

## KENNEL INSPECTION REPORTS

HSUS investigators reviewed USDA and/or state kennel inspection reports on over 100 of Petland's breeders, and found that more than 60 percent of the reports listed serious violations of basic animal care regulations. Many USDA licensed breeders exhibit a long history of substandard care and yet remain licensed. It is clear that Petland isn't reviewing these publicly-available records to ensure that their breeders employ "the highest standards of pet care."

USDA inspectors follow regulations outlined in the Animal Welfare Act. The specific regulations can be found on the USDA website at [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov). The most common problems noted on the USDA reports that The HSUS received are roughly in the following categories:

- **FILTH:** accumulation of feces, grime, dirty, disease-fostering conditions
- **INCORRECT/NON-EXISTENT RECORDS:** dog inventory incorrect, no written program of vet care, no certification for dogs bought from unlicensed sources
- **FACILITY DAMAGE:** Rusting, broken, damaged, chewed, or sagging cages; or sharp, dangerous points in pens and cages
- **SICK/INJURED DOGS** in need of vet care
- **LACK OF PROTECTION FROM THE ELEMENTS:** Inadequate bedding or means of warmth, lack of shelter or shade
- **TOO-SMALL CAGES** do not meet the USDA's formula for cage space
- **INSPECTOR HAD NO ACCESS;** inspection not done because no one let the inspector in
- **PAWS THROUGH WIRE:** wide wire flooring allowing paws to slip through wires in cage floor, creating an injury potential
- **EXPIRED VETERINARY MEDICATIONS**
- **SHIPPING UNDERAGE PUPPIES:** Underdeveloped immune systems are more vulnerable to disease (NOTE: puppies must be eight weeks of age before shipping)

Many of the USDA reports acquired as part of the investigation are available for public viewing online at [humanesociety.org/pupmills](http://humanesociety.org/pupmills).



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## CONCLUSIONS

Petland stores investigated by The HSUS have been misleading customers about where their puppies come from. Petland claims it knows its breeders and deals only with those who have "the highest standards of pet care," and that they NEVER deal with puppy mills. Our investigation revealed that the stores investigated DO buy puppy mill puppies. That is why we are asking Petland to get out of the puppy mill support business and to stop selling puppies.

The tales told by Petland are typical of pet store sales. The HSUS has heard similar claims from other pet stores across the U.S. The greatest victims are the breeding parents. Mother and father dogs will spend their lifetimes locked in cages, churning out puppies for pet store sales. Puppy mills sell their puppies through pet stores, fancy internet sites and even newspaper classified ads. Puppy buyers MUST go and visit where their puppy was born and see how the parents are treated before handing over any money.

Puppy mills thrive because people buy the puppies. The dog loving, puppy-buying public has it in its power to stop puppy mills for good simply by making sure they never buy a puppy mill puppy.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

While most of the puppies from puppy mills are eventually sold through pet stores or over the Internet, the unseen victims are the mother and father dogs, who are forced to live their entire lives behind bars without hope of ever being part of a family or even seeing the outside of their cages.

*Here is how dog lovers can help:*

- Call or write a letter to Petland expressing your concern about puppy mills and asking Petland to stop selling puppies.

Petland Corporate Office  
250 Riverside Street  
Chillicothe, Ohio 45601  
(740) 775-2464  
[www.petland.com](http://www.petland.com)

- Consumers who purchased a puppy from Petland should contact The HSUS directly by filling out the Share Your Story form on our website, [humanesociety.org/puppymills](http://humanesociety.org/puppymills).
- Never purchase a puppy from a pet store, over the Internet, or from anyone you haven't screened in person; **consider adoption first.**
- Find out more about how you can take action at [humanesociety.org/puppymills](http://humanesociety.org/puppymills).
- For tips on finding a compassionate breeder, visit [humanesociety.org/puppy](http://humanesociety.org/puppy).