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THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Environmental Impacts of Puppy Mills

A puppy mill is “a dog breeding operation in which the health of the dogs is disregarded in order to maintain a low overhead and maximize profits.” *Avenson v. Zegart*, 577 F. Supp. 958, Dist. Court, Minnesota (1984). State and federal inspection reports reveal that a common method employed to maximize profits includes irresponsible waste management practices that are harmful to the environment. Impacts may be caused by improper disposal of feces, urine and carcasses.

- A report by Missourians for the Protection of Dogs in 2010 uncovered numerous cases in which dog dealers improperly disposed of dog carcasses in apparent violation of environmental laws, including one dealer that was disposing of approximately 200 pounds of dead animals a month.
- The pathogens present in dog feces can survive for long periods of time in water that seeps into the ground, drains into wet-dry streams and eventually make its way into major rivers that are sources of public drinking water. In at least one documented case, a stream downhill from a West Virginia puppy mill was found to have a coliform bacteria load 400 times greater than the legal limit. The pathogens in dog feces can cause harmful and even deadly infections in humans.
- In puppy mill facilities it is typical for dog feces to be left on the ground to fester for long periods of time. This waste produces methane, a powerful and dangerous greenhouse gas. Further, because basic animal care is frequently lacking in these facilities, it is common for the dogs to be infected with and to carry pathogens. These are excreted in the dogs’ feces and transfer to the soil. Since soil has the longest and most persistent potential for harboring a pathogen, there is a high likelihood of subsequent infection by any person or animal that comes in contact with the waste. Disease-causing organisms that can be transmitted from dogs to humans include tapeworms, hookworms, cryptosporidium, and Giardia.
- Aerosolization of microbial pathogens, endotoxins, odors, and dust particles is an inevitable consequence of the generation and management of animal wastes. When dog feces are allowed to remain in an area, a common practice at puppy mills, the material dries and becomes flaky, enabling lighter particles to be picked up by wind and become airborne. These particulates can travel through air currents up to 600 miles. Decomposition of the waste materials creates ammonia which may convert to particulates and be lifted into the atmosphere. There can be impacts if the ammonia settles on vegetation or if the polluted runoff causes algae blooms in the receiving waters. Particulate ammonia can not only reach our riparian systems through feeder streams, but can also travel many miles.



Canine abuse and environmental impacts are inextricably linked. As a result, **better regulation would not only impact the welfare of the dogs, but would also improve the quality of water, air and soil.**