

# Curbing the Puppy Trade

Dog lovers are divided over new efforts to ensure that all breeders treat their pooches humanely

By ANITA HAMILTON

**W**ITH ITS NARROW, WINDING roads dotted with horse-drawn buggies and signs for homemade quilts, candles, jams and jellies, Pennsylvania's Amish country in Lancaster County attracts millions of tourists each year. But giant billboards along a main highway call attention to a less appealing local industry. "WELCOME TO LANCASTER ... HOME TO 100'S OF PUPPY MILLS," reads one sign. It was paid for by Last Chance for Animals, a national animal-advocacy organization that opposes commercial breeding facilities where hundreds of puppies are raised in cramped metal cages without proper food, veterinary care and often even fresh air.

Activists estimate that 200,000 puppies are bred and sold each year in Lancaster County. The public's fascination with new designer dogs like the pugle (a cross between a pug and beagle) as well as the ease of buying a dog on websites like *nextdaypets.com* has only increased demand. And with that has come a backlash, especially in states like Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri, where there is a high concentration of breeders. There,

and even at the national level, a movement is under way to ensure that the U.S.'s most popular house pets, many of which are purchased during the holiday season, are raised in humane conditions. "No pet store will tell you that its puppies come from a puppy mill," says Ed Sayres, president of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, "but these animals are commercially exploited to generate the highest amount of profit at the lowest possible cost."

The exact number of puppy mills is not known, since offenders often fail to register their operations with the government, as required by law. But hundreds of violations are reported each year. The horrific conditions found in some mills can cause health and behavioral defects ranging from genetic problems caused by overbreeding, such as hip dysplasia, to overaggressive play. "In order for a dog to be a normal dog, it needs to stay with its mother and littermates for a good eight to 10 weeks," says Carol Araneo-Mayer, co-founder of Adopt-A-Pet, a rescue group in Freehold, N.J. She says many puppies are separated and even sold long before they learn how to play with other animals and not to be afraid of people. Also, health problems can pile up. In May, Lancaster County residents Raymond and

Joyce Stoltzfus agreed to pay some \$50,000 to reimburse 171 customers who claimed the puppies they bought from the couple suffered from pneumonia, heart defects and kidney failure.

**CRUSADE A highway billboard condemns the way many dogs are raised in Lancaster County, Pa.**



**BUYER BEWARE**

Here's how to make sure that your new puppy is happy and healthy



MARCY HUNT DAVIS

Welcome to Lancaster... Home to 100's of Puppy Mills



99.50

STEEN

**CARETAKER**  
Breeder Sam  
McDonald favors  
the new regulations

PETER MURPHY FOR TIME



#### SHOP AT A SHELTER

Local shelters frequently have purebred dogs, like this rescued miniature pinscher, left, and ensure that all animals have had their shots and were checked by a veterinarian.

#### DON'T BUY ONLINE

It's smart to research the type of dog you want on the Web (at a site like [akc.org](http://akc.org)). But to guarantee that you're getting the pet you expect, always visit the seller directly.

#### CHECK THE PEDIGREE

Since temperament can be inherited, ask to meet your puppy's mother and father to see what they are like. A good breeder will guarantee your purchase for life.

founder of the new United Against Puppy Mills group in Lancaster. The organization has worked to shutter large-scale breeders by petitioning local zoning boards to deny them permits.

But breeders say such efforts unfairly tarnish those who do treat their dogs well. Ken Brandt, a lobbyist for the Penn-

sylvania Professional Pet Breeders Association, complains that the activists won't be satisfied until all large breeders are shut down. "If we built the biggest kennel in the world, with carpet on the floor and a fireplace for the dogs, animal-rights people would say, 'Can't you make it bigger?'"

Such arguments don't persuade U.S.

Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania. Santorum, who has a German shepherd named Schatzie, has long advocated stricter animal-care laws, which regulate the basic food, shelter and air quality that wholesalers must provide for animals. He says his state's dubious distinction as the "Puppy-Mill Capital of the East" is part of what motivates him to press for change. In May, he introduced the federal Pet Animal Welfare Statute (PAWS), which would require anyone who sells more than 25 dogs a year to comply with the same inspections as large-scale wholesalers, who are regulated by the Animal Welfare Act. Inspectors measure the size of kennels or cages and make sure the living conditions are safe, clean and climate-controlled. Under PAWS, violators could face suspensions for as much as 60 days instead of the current 21-day maximum.

Even though Santorum has widespread support for PAWS among groups like the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Humane Society, there is a rift in the vast community of dog fanciers. Some believe that even midsize dog-breeding operations need regulation, and others are worried that those breeders, who pride themselves on the quality of the dogs they raise, often in their homes, would be put out of business.

That division over PAWS is especially obvious inside the American Kennel Club (A.K.C.), which registers nearly a million purebred dogs each year. The organization officially supports the bill, but many of its member clubs do not. Sam McDonald, an A.K.C. member in Chester Springs, Pa., says he thinks the legislation is fair because "if someone has more than 25 dogs, then there needs to be someone checking out what is going on."

But Margaret Crothers, an A.K.C. member in neighboring Lancaster, who raises Labrador retrievers, says the extra paperwork and inspections would be a nuisance for the "good breeders who are very conscientious." She argues that existing puppy lemon laws in 17 states, which require sellers to refund buyers of diseased dogs, along with local anticruelty statutes, provide enough protection.

Of course, there is another way to scale down puppy mills: cut back on the demand for the dogs grown in them. Adopting dogs from local shelters—a quarter of which are purebreds—would save some of the estimated 3 million dogs that are euthanized each year, and could result in a happy outcome for all involved. —*With reporting by Sean Scully/Lancaster*