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## News

### New Illinois Law Helps Stop Puppy Mills

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By Rudy Linke, Best Friends Network volunteer

Consumers now get information about the origin and health of pet store puppies and kittens prior to purchasing

The **Pet Disclosure Law** crackles with newness, having been galvanized into law on January 1, 2011. This law is a newly-forged legal tool designed to give consumers full information on dogs and cats in pet stores and shelters. Groups who work to eliminate puppy mills championed the bill as it made its way through the legislative process.

"This will be the first time consumers will have the right to read about the origin and health of a puppy they are considering buying before even picking it up," says Cari Meyers, founder of **The Puppy Mill Project**. "Consumers will have a chance to view the information without requesting it or getting false information from a sales person. This information is to be posted on or near every cage of every animal in the store."

The law requires all stores that sell dogs and cats display a disclosure card on or near the cage. Some of the items that must be on the cage card are:

- Full price, including adoption fees or any other applicable fee
- Breed, age, date of birth, sex and color
- Details of inoculation or medical treatment that the dog or cat received while under the possession of the pet shop
- Name and address of the breeder and the facility where the animal was born
- Information on the pedigree of the pet, including registration numbers
- Any dates or reasons the pet was returned
- Any and all medical history before or during the time the store or shelter had the pet
- Warrantees
- Pet shop operator's license number
- Any additional remarks as warranted

To see an example of either card, click on the appropriate name: [Pet Shop](#) or [Animal Control or Shelter](#).

Shelters and animal rescue organizations must comply with the law, but they only need to provide the information they're aware of, since many of their dogs and cats have incomplete histories.

"Our small shelter is not one which accommodates the public walking up and down the kennels," says Janice Triptow, president of **Chicago Canine Rescue**. "The animals can be eyed from the door, but our staff is required to pull a dog and bring that dog to an interested party so posting information at the kennel was not and is not impactful. We do have the information in a location where the public can review it."

A representative from the facility, whether pet store or rescue, must sign a copy of the disclosure card, as does the buyer, who can keep a copy. "Requiring that an adopter ultimately attest to these disclosures is a good thing for both parties," says Triptow.

Organizations who work to stop puppy mills, such as **The Puppy Mill Project**, realize that consumers must do their own research if they want to avoid buying a dog from a disreputable breeder. "The consumer has to do the homework and this is the part we need to stress," Meyers says. "They need to go home and look up the breeder and check for violations. Unfortunately, even if there are no violations, it does not mean the breeder is not a puppy mill."

The USDA allows the public to look up the inspection records of breeders (see instructions under **More Ways to Help**), but Meyers also has a way of getting the information. "Consumers can go to **The Puppy Mill Project** website and find the information regarding the pet stores. We have a section dedicated to finding the pet store. Then the consumer can make an educated decision."

Animal advocates are ebullient about the new Illinois law, but they also realize that the law holds little power without the energy of caring people who work to hold pet shops accountable for their business practices. Information and action can — and will — change the world for suffering pets if enough people speak for those who have no voice.



New Illinois Landmark

**How you can help:**

- Compliance with the new law is spotty. A quick check of a few pet shops shows that some stores don't have cage cards on display. If you see a pet shop that isn't complying with the law, report them to the Illinois Department of Agriculture (the government organization responsible for enforcing this law) by sending an e-mail to [Regina.Burris@illinois.gov](mailto:Regina.Burris@illinois.gov) or by calling her office at (217) 782-6657.
- Learn more about our work to fight puppy mills by becoming a fan of the Best Friends [puppy mill initiatives](#).
- Visit your local shelter for your next dog or cat.

**For more information:**

- Look up pet shops and find which breeders they use by visiting [The Puppy Mill Project's pet store look-up page](#).
- Or look up breeders at the USDA site by [clicking here](#) and following these instructions:
  - On the bottom of the page click "Inspection Reports & License Registration"
  - When the form pops up type in ONLY the last name of the breeder
  - When the list comes up, click on the PDF tab next to the correct name to view the report.

*Photos by Best Friends staff*



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