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## Guest Essay: Don't ban T-shirts when pet stores are real problem

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/deerfield/news/forum/2129805,deerfield-essayparker-040110-s1.article>)

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On Feb. 20, Northbrook Court barred about 50 shoppers from the mall for wearing T-shirts that said:

"A PET STORE PUPPY IS A PUPPY MILL PUPPY! RESPONSIBLE BREEDERS WOULD NEVER SELL TO PET STORES!"

I was not with the group that was refused entrance, but I was kicked out of the mall even after I removed that T-shirt and continued to shop.

The mall code of conduct, printed on little cards and handed out by mall security guards, outlines unacceptable activities: violating the law, loitering, profanity, abusiveness, threatening safety or the well-being of the property, disrupting the pleasant environment, acting in a manner inconsistent with the family-oriented purpose of the property, or disrupting business.

All I did was visit five stores, buy a pair of pants, and attempt to express my concern about the maltreatment of animals and consumers.

The police escorted me out of the mall.

Local consumers should know that Northbrook Court has a tenant, Pawsh Puppies, that sells teacup puppies.

Please be aware: No reputable breeder sells dogs in pet stores. Reputable breeders never deliberately breed the so-called teacup size because of the serious, life-threatening health problems common in very tiny dogs.

It is common knowledge that puppy mills are notorious for mistreating animals. Oprah Winfrey devoted an entire show to this topic. See the Web site of the Humane Society of the United States for more information on puppy mill practices and the health and behavioral problems of the dogs they produce.

Meanwhile, so many wonderful pets wait for adoption in shelters and foster homes, and millions more are euthanized because there are more pets than humans born every year in the United States. Do the math. There just aren't enough homes.

The Illinois Legislature is currently considering a consumer protection bill (House Bill 5772) that would require pet stores to post detailed information about the breeder who supplies each puppy.

Shoppers should have the right to know exactly where their dogs originate so that they may make informed choices before buying an animal. Right now, they do not.

In the meantime, consumers do not have to lift a finger to stop the horrific practices of puppy mill breeding if they don't want to. All we have to do is refuse to buy puppies in pet stores.

I am revolted by the presence of a pet store in our community. In fact, I consider it offensive, abusive, profane and definitely not family-oriented once you get beneath the cute exterior and understand the horror and cruelty on which it rests.

Northbrook Court management should read its own code of conduct before it leases to vendors whose ethics are suspect and then kicks out shoppers whose visible concern for both animal and consumer is their only offense.

And next time I'm in their mall (if ever), I'll wear any shirt I darn well please.