



## Chicago Pet shop manager calls shelter dogs "other people's problems."

By Chicago Dog Training Examiner, Jennifer Nicole Hack

Pawsh Puppies, a store that sells puppies, has locations in both Northbrook, IL and Lincoln Park, Chicago. The two locations of the company, owned by Laurence Portnoy, have recently been the site of ongoing protests by a group of animal advocates called "The Puppy Mill Project", as well as many local residents who oppose the sales of these puppies. In an article from the *Northbrook Star*, store manger of Pawsh Puppies, Alex Gershbeyn, talked about adopting shelter dogs, and was quoted as saying: **"You're buying other people's problems. These dogs have been abused in some cases and will bite. Our pups are happy and healthy."**

This inaccurate and truly ignorant statement may simply be a puppy seller disparaging shelter dogs in an attempt to increase his bottom line. But it raises some interesting questions we will discuss here.

**Where to shelter or rescue dogs come from?**

Shelter or rescue dogs can come from various sources, and they are often loved pets relinquished by their owners through no fault of their own. Some may even be already housebroken or trained. Others may have been given up for behavioral reasons or due to a lack of basic training. Still others may be young puppies. Most shelter dogs are *not* abused. According to the Humane Society of the United States, *allergies* are actually one of the most common reasons people relinquish a pet! Some other common reasons cited by owners are "Moving to a place that doesn't allow pets," or "Can't afford." Still other shelter dogs were picked up as strays, or transferred from another shelter. In fact, the dogs in shelters may have originally been purchased from a *pet shop*, or obtained through a breeder, a friend, or another shelter. Pet shops do not require unwanted dogs to be returned to them, so a person who made an impulse decision to buy that cute \$2,000 puppy may end up later dumping that pet at a shelter. Adding a dog to the family should be a fully researched and well-thought-out decision.

### "PUPPY MILLS"...

Pawsh Puppies denies dealing with "puppy mills." However, according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a "Puppy Mill" is defined as "a commercial farming operation in which purebred dogs are raised in large numbers,"

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so by that definition, and the large number of puppies they sell in their store who have been purchased from "commercial" breeders, **Pawsh Puppies does deal with "puppy mills"**.

So how can the puppy store owner deny it? Maybe he has a different definition than the dictionary? The hot-button term "**puppy mill**" may mean different things to different people. **However, "Puppy Mill", or "Puppy Farm," is defined by most dictionaries as commercial breeding operation, often (but not always) large-scale, for profit.** And these are the ones that are USDA licensed (read below), the same breeders Pawsh Puppies claims to buy from. Shelters may also have large influxes of dogs from puppy mill raids. On June 4, 2009, The Anti-Cruelty Society here in Chicago received 20 puppies, including many small breeds, from a puppy mill raid in Tennessee. According to the ASPCA more than 250 dogs were recovered in the raid. When seized the dogs lacked basic care including little or no food, were kept in small feces-covered cages, and had inadequate ventilation. These puppies were destined to end up sold to puppy shops, dog brokers, or similar outlets.

***"But they said the breeders were USDA Licensed or Inspected"... THE TRUTH!***

On their website, Pawsh Puppies states "Our breeders are all licensed by the USDA," as if that were a mark of quality? They also state, vaguely, that they purchase from the "top breeders in the country..." What exactly makes them "top breeders," is left to question, as they give zero evidence of quality, and further independent research on pet stores, including talking to customers who may have purchased unhealthy dogs, leads one to think otherwise.

The USDA regulates facilities who produce at a *wholesale level*; produced for pet stores, dog brokers, or research facilities. Dogs being used in commercial breeding operations are often raised like livestock, living in **USDA licensed** breeding facilities. They may have hundreds of dogs. The USDA only requires what they call "minimum standards for care and treatment", such as food, water, shelter from the elements, etc. The breeding facilities are **not** required to provide any of the human contact, socialization, stimulation, or daily exercise a dog deserves, and may impregnate their breeding females constantly, then get rid of them when they fail to produce. Once the mother dog is no longer producing, they may be auctioned off, euthanized, or sold for research. Some breeders have even gotten away with **shooting** their unwanted dogs, as the law at the time, or in that area, did not make it

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illegal. Here is an article about 80 dogs shot by kennel operators in Pennsylvania, a kennel that was previously *licensed*.

Breeding dogs do not experience a home life with a family. It is impossible to keep 300, or even 30 dogs inside your home, so the dogs live in separate facilities. Once again, the standards are minimal. For example, it is legal for the breeders to keep temperatures between 45 degrees up to 85 degrees- they are not required to provide certain comforts to the animals. Imagine a small pregnant dog housed alone in a small bare cage in a 50-degree barn building. Is that something you would support through your purchases?

The puppies you see in stores often come in "shipments" from USDA licensed mass breeding operations out of state. They are inspected at different frequencies. **Some facilities may be inspected less than once a year.** They may have had violations. Even if they pass inspections, which you can find out through public record, how humane or ethical these dog brokers are may be another story. And you can't always count on the puppy store owner to attest to this. According to Jackie Borchew, of Orphans of the Storm, a non-profit animal shelter based in Riverwoods, IL "...most of these pet stores acquire their puppies without ever having visited or researched the backgrounds

of their breeders."

Further information on USDA licensed facilities and the Animal Welfare Act may be found online at the [USDA website](#). You can see what "USDA licensed facility" entails by doing your own research, and individual breeder/dealer reports are public information. **\*\*\*Disclaimer: This article serves as purely informational in regards to different animal facilities and practices, and does not state or imply any direct or indirect relation of the aforementioned kennels or practices to Pawsh Puppies.**

**Is a puppy better than an adult?**

When you buy from a puppy store, you are taking just as much of a chance on a dogs genetics. You cannot see the parents, nor can you have any warranty that they puppy may not grow up to have aggression, health problems, or behavior issues, genetic or otherwise. Nobody can give you a warranty or guarantee on future behavior. This is the chance you take with *any* pet, puppy or adult. You must rely on socializing and training your dog properly. **Obtaining a dog as a puppy does not guarantee the dog will grow to be any better behaved or less aggressive than if you were to get an adult dog.** Furthermore, rescues can often help match a dog to you and your lifestyle! PAWS Chicago, a non-for-profit shelter (also located in

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Lincoln Park), has the Meet your Match™ - Dog Adopter Survey; a color-coded system for matching pets to their prospective owners through a computer test. Pet shops do not have this, and may not even have knowledge of the breed they're selling. They may not care for the puppy's long-term health, either. Pet stores are a *business* and their first interest is *profit*.

### Why should I adopt a dog?

When you adopt a dog, you are not only gaining a companion, you are saving a life. You are also making room for another homeless dog to take that dog's place in the shelter and giving *another* dog a chance at adoption. On the other hand, if you buy from a pet store, you are not saving a life, you are simply making room for another "shipment" of puppies to take that pup's place. You are encouraging it. While you may pay \$1,350 even for a mixed breed (aka mutt) in a pet shop, you can find a large variety of mixed breeds, and also many purebreds in shelters for a fraction of that price. For example, all types of puppies and dogs at Animal Care and Control are \$65 adoption fee, which includes spay/neuter and vaccinations. Also, remember that the puppy store may have purchased their "stock" for only \$400 or so, from a mass-producer of puppies, and could be re-selling it marked up to \$1,500.

### What about good breeders?

Even reputable breeders will often have a lower price than a pet shop! Do your research- A reputable breeder knows the parents (and has matched them together for specific reasons), knows the dogs background, pedigrees, and genetics, and health. They perform any necessary pre-breeding health testing to ensure healthy long-lived offspring- such as OFA, CERF, full thyroid test, cardio screening, VWD test, or variations depending on breed. Often one or both parents should be titled in conformation, obedience, or another dog sport that shows suitability for breeding. All the dogs should be registered with AKC or UKC, (but registration alone is not a mark of quality). **Reputable breeders do not create or sell mixed breeds, period.** If you are seeking a specific breed, a great place to start is a **local breed club**. Or a local dog show where you will find fanciers who truly love the breed, show their dogs or title them in different venues, and are breeding not for profits, but to create better dogs. **A reputable breeder will never sell to a pet shop or dog broker, period.** They want to know where and to whom their puppies are going, and want first rights to take them back, should you not be able to keep them. But you must make sure they breeder is truly reputable- Here is a fantastic comparison of reputable breeders

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## VS. Backyard breeders

A dog is a dog, whether purchased for \$3,000, or adopted for \$55. They will still give you the same companionship and lifelong love.

Whether you make an educated choice, or a poor choice, that is up to you the consumer.

### **When you spend money, you are voting!**

Also check out [The 7 worst reasons to get a puppy](#), and [Understanding puppy classified ads, don't be fooled!](#) and [see Many celebrities speak out against puppy stores](#), a mainstream cause

Besides Pawsh Puppies, there are several other pet shops in the Chicago area that may sell "Puppy Mill" puppies: Let's Pet Puppies, Pocket Puppies, Animal Kingdom, Top Dog's Puppy Store, Happiness Is Pets, and Petland. Remember, reputable breeders never sell to pet shops.

Now, here is a video of our rescue dog, a purebred Dalmatian adopted from a breed rescue. He happens to be fantastic with children and is well behaved due to obedience training. Alex Gershbeyn, or anyone, tell me this dog is "someone elses problem"!



**Chicago Dog Training Examiner**

Jennifer Nicole Hack

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