

PUPPY MILLS | FEBRUARY 9, 2012

# Puppy brokers: the story behind the puppy vans delivering to pet stores



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<http://www.examiner.com/pets-in-chicago/confiscated-puppy-photo>

This is one of the puppies confiscated Tuesday by Chicago Animal Care and Control. It has since been cleaned up and is in the care of animal welfare workers.

**Credits:**

Friends of Chicago Animal Care and Control

Tuesday is delivery day for many pet stores throughout the country as vans loaded with puppies head from the puppy mills to sales locations. As we reported [Tuesday \(.../pets-in-chicago/puppy-transport-busted-chicago-on-the-way-to-a-pet-store\)](#), the one van that didn't make it to its point of delivery was packed with 43 puppies that were headed from Iowa puppy mills to Joe's Pet Salon and other locations.

According to Chicago Animal Care and Control, the dogs were packed 3 to 6 to a carrier that was meant to normally carry one dog. The puppies were between 6 to 8 weeks old and are now in the hands of CACC pending the disposition of the legal case against Travis Wester and Larry Subject. The two Iowa men are facing misdemeanor animal cruelty charges and being held in the Cook County Jail in lieu of \$10,000 bond, according to prosecutors. They will appear in misdemeanor court at Harrison and Flournoy on Thursday, February 16 between 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

"This is not an isolated incident. This is how puppies are transported on a daily basis across this country – they do not come from the puppy stork," says Cari Meyers, founder of [The Puppy Mill Project](#) (<http://www.thepupmillproject.org/>). "These guys just happened to have gotten caught before they made their delivery. These two men were just unlucky."



By **Kathy Mordini**  
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Police discovered Wester and Subject sleeping in their van around 7 a.m. It was parked in the 2500 block of West Cermak just blocks from Joe's Pet Salon. They heard barking and found 43 dogs crammed into 10 cages without food or water. The dogs were dirty and covered in urine and feces.

"Fortunately, all of these dogs were still alive when they were found," adds Meyers. "Too often, a large number of dogs don't make to the pet stores because they are packed like sardines. They don't get food, water or proper ventilation in the back of the vans."

The dogs ranged from Huskies to Chihuahuas to boxers. They are currently in isolation at CACC to help protect their own health. The dogs will only be made available for adoption if the courts release them when the case is complete. According to documentation in the van with the dogs, they were being hauled by Oleo Acres, a dog broker that transports dogs from Iowa puppy mills for pet stores throughout the country.

"Dog brokers are the personal shoppers for the pet stores," says Meyers. "They go to the puppy mills with a shopping list from various pet stores and hand pick the dogs the stores have requested. Multiple puppies are loaded in each cage and the van is packed with as many cages as possible for the trek to pet stores across the country. If puppies die during transport, they are written off as a business loss."

**[The Puppy Mill Project \(http://www.thepupppymillproject.org/\)](http://www.thepupppymillproject.org/)** is a Chicago-based advocacy group that educates the public to raise awareness about puppy mills and their direct connection to pet stores, Internet sites and newspaper ads that sell dogs. The organization works on **[legislation \(http://www.thepupppymillproject.org/know\\_the\\_law.html\)](http://www.thepupppymillproject.org/know_the_law.html)** to improve oversight of dog breeders, holds peaceful protests outside pet stores and attends community events to educate about the origin of pets sold in pet stores.

*Do you volunteer or work for a shelter or rescue that has programs you'd like to promote? Do you work in a pet-related business that has an interesting story to tell? If so, contact me at [kathypetexam@gmail.com](mailto:kathypetexam@gmail.com)*