

Puppy Mills



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Studio

What is a puppy mill? Puppy mills are breeding facilities that produce puppies in large numbers. The puppies are sold either directly to the public via the Internet, newspaper ads, at the mill itself, or are sold to brokers and pet shops across the country. The documented problems of puppy mills include overbreeding, inbreeding, minimal veterinary care, poor quality of food and shelter, lack of socialization with humans, overcrowded cages, and the killing of unwanted animals. To the unwitting consumer, this situation frequently means buying a puppy facing an array of immediate veterinary problems or harboring genetically borne diseases that do not appear until years later. In 1994, *Time* magazine estimated that as many as 25% of purebred dogs were afflicted with serious genetic problems.

Thousands of these breeding operations currently exist in the United States, many of them despite repeated violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is charged with enforcing the AWA; however, with 96 inspectors nationwide who oversee not only the thousands of puppy mills, but also zoos, circuses, laboratories, and animals transported via commercial airlines, they are an agency stretched thin.

What You Can Do To close down puppy mills and ensure the safety and humane treatment of dogs trapped in commercial kennels, you can:

- Encourage state and federal officials to stop the mass production and exportation of sick and traumatized dogs. In addition to passing new laws, legislators can demand that existing laws be enforced.
- Urge other people not to buy puppies from pet stores, over the Internet, or from newspaper ads.
- Visit a local pet store to determine where it obtains its puppies. Don't be misled by claims that its dogs were not bred in puppy mills. Insist on seeing breed registry papers or the interstate health certificate for each puppy. The papers will list the breeder's and/or wholesaler's name and address.
- Write letters to the editor about puppy mills and pet stores. Explain the mills' inhumane treatment of puppies and their contribution to pet overpopulation. For the Florida Today paper mail letters to:
Your Views FLORIDA TODAY
P.O. Box 419000 Melbourne, FL 32941-9000
Fax letters to: (321) 255-9550
E-mail letters to: letters@floridatoday.com.

- Contact your member of the U.S. House of Representatives and your two U.S. Senators, asking them to urge the USDA to strictly enforce the Animal Welfare Act and to support efforts to increase funding for USDA/Animal Care.

Senator Mel Martinez

356 Russell Senate Office Building Washington,
DC 20510

Phone: (202) 224-3041

<http://martinez.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContactInformation.ContactForm>

Senator Bill Nelson

716 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC
20510

Phone: (202) 224-5274

<http://billnelson.senate.gov/contact/email.cfm>

Representative Dave Weldon, 15th
Congressional District

Address: 2347 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-3671

Contact Page: www.house.gov/writerep

Representative Tom Feeney, 24th Congressional
District

Address: 323 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202)225-2706

Contact Page: www.house.gov/writerep

Dog Fighting

What is dog fighting? Dog fighting is a sadistic "contest" in which two dogs—specifically bred, conditioned, and trained to fight—are placed in a pit (generally a small arena enclosed by plywood walls) to fight each other for the spectators' entertainment and gambling. Fights average nearly an hour in length and often last more than two hours. Dogfights end when one of the dogs will not or cannot continue.

Because dog fighting yields such large profits for participants, the minor penalties associated with misdemeanor convictions are not a sufficient deterrent. Dogfighters merely absorb these fines as part of the cost of doing business. The cruelty inherent in dog fighting should be punished by more than a slap on the hand. Dog fighting is not a spur-of-the-moment act; it is a premeditated and cruel practice.

Those involved in dog fighting go to extensive lengths to avoid detection by law enforcement, so investigations can be difficult, dangerous, and expensive.

Dog fighting is illegal in all 50 states and a felony offense in almost every state.

Being a spectator should also be a felony. Spectators provide much of the profit associated with dog fighting. The money generated by admission fees and gambling helps keep this "sport" alive. Because dogfights are illegal and therefore not widely publicized, spectators do not merely happen upon a fight; they seek it out. They are willing participants who support a criminal activity through their paid admission and attendance.

What can you do to help stop dog fighting?

- Write letters to the editor about dog fighting. Explain the inhumane treatment of the animals and the negative effects on our society. For the Florida Today paper mail letters to:

Your Views FLORIDA TODAY

P.O. Box 419000 Melbourne, FL 32941-9000

Fax letters to: (321) 255-9550

E-mail letters to: letters@floridatoday.com

- Write to local law enforcement officials and judges to urge them to take the issue seriously.

Telephone the Brevard County Sheriff's Office
Community Relations/Public Information Officer at
(321) 264-7788 or e-mail:

andrew.walters@bcso.us

Mail letters to:

Sheriff Jack Parker

Brevard County Sheriff's Office

700 Park Avenue, Bldg A

Titusville, FL 32780

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- Contact your member of the U.S. House of Representatives and your two U.S. Senators. Let them know that you feel strongly about this issue and urge them to support legislation designed to stop it.

Senator Mel Martinez

356 Russell Senate Office Building Washington,
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Phone: (202) 224-3041

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