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561 • 685 • 9299

peaceofmindanimalcare@yahoo.com

Puppy Mills

Thinking of getting a dog this year? We've all been tempted by that cute little puppy in the pet store window. Before you give in to the temptation and buy that furry bundle of joy, there are some things you should know.

For one, that cute little puppy most likely came from a large-scale, substandard commercial breeding operation, commonly known as a puppy mill. Puppy mills usually house dogs in overcrowded and often unsanitary conditions, without adequate veterinary care, food, water and socialization. The breeding stocks at puppy mills (possibly your new puppy's mom and dad) are bred as often as possible in order to increase profits. Unlike your lucky puppy, the mom and dad will probably never make it out of the mill.

HARSH REALITIES

The result? By buying a pet shop puppy, not only are you likely perpetuating and supporting a cruel industry, you—*the consumer*—run the risk of taking home a sick puppy! Dogs from puppy mills have been reportedly diagnosed with ailments such as respiratory infections and pneumonia, as well as hereditary defects like hip dysplasia. They may also be poorly socialized to people and other animals. Also, your new "purebred" puppy might not really be a purebred. Dogs at puppy mills are often bred indiscriminately, and lineage records are sometimes falsified to misrepresent that the dog is a purebred, when in fact, the animal is a mixed breed. Responsible breeders do not sell their dogs through pet stores.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you're looking to make a puppy part of your family, check your local shelters first. There are so many amazing dogs who need homes. If your heart is set on a specific breed, keep in mind that one in four shelter dogs is a purebred. Additionally, you can do an Internet search for breed-specific rescue organizations. If those attempts still don't give you the purebred puppy you're looking for, you'll need to learn how to choose a responsible breeder.

Source: ASPCA