Special Report on Abuses in the Pet Industry
The pet industry is creating maximum danger for animals and minimal satisfaction for customers.

A puppy seemed like the perfect present for the new bride of a Greensboro, N.C., man. The 3-month-old schnauzer he purchased at a local pet shop quickly won the newlyweds' hearts. But, almost immediately, the puppy developed chronic diarrhea and a serious cough and became lethargic. A veterinarian diagnosed the illness as coccidiosis, an intestinal parasite. The puppy died at a veterinary clinic 2 weeks after he was purchased.

Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon experience. The incidence of such problems is increasing at almost the same rate that Americans are increasing their purchase of dogs and cats. With the sale of dogs and cats expected to reach $310 million annually this year, animals are being handled more and more like merchandise instead of the living creatures they are. The files of local humane societies and consumer protection agencies contain thousands of stories of people who have purchased sick, diseased, or poorly bred cats and dogs. The State of Illinois, alone, receives 2,500 complaints a year from dissatisfied purchasers of pets.

Although some pet stores honor their warranties by replacing sick and diseased dogs, it is impossible to make up for the pain and suffering to the animal and the emotional stress to the pet owner.

The problem is not just the pet shop but the entire system that has been developed to supply it. By raising puppies in the great rural expanses of the Midwest, the pet industry concentrates its most costly operations, breeding and whelping, where there is the lowest overhead. By shipping the puppies to cities throughout the nation, especially to those on the East and West Coasts, the industry obtains the highest return available for its investment. (Cats, which are expected to account for only $60 million of the $310 million in 1974 pet sales, are usually obtained from catteries within the region of the
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Tits, hookworms, roundworms, and the effects of exposure to the cold. A Doberman pinscher puppy was found dead, and a pomeranian puppy suffering from exposure had to be euthanized.

"The condition of these puppies was symptomatic of the entire pet shop supply system," said HSUS Chief Investigator Frank J. McMahon, who assisted in rescuing the animals. "If the puppy isn't healthy when he leaves the puppy mill, he is more likely to succumb to the trauma of shipment.

Puppy mills often suffer from the lack of human contact during the critical development age of 6 to 10 weeks, according to Dr. Fox. Handling by people at this age results in socialization, and without it, the dog may never develop a close attachment to people, said

"It cannot be stressed strongly enough that puppies are not tradeable commodities," he emphasized. "They are developing organisms, extremely susceptible to physical and psychological trauma."

Reporting on Washington, D.C., an area pet shop in a recent issue of Washingtonian magazine, writer Carol Frey told of 30 puppies infected with distemper at one pet shop, of a German shepherd puppy dying of starvation 5 hours after purchase, and of another puppy dying of pneumonia shortly after purchase.

A New York woman wrote HSUS about the grief and expense of trying to cure her pet shop-purchased Lhasa Apso of congenital mangia. The puppy eventually had to be euthanized. The pet shop offered only to give her credit toward the purchase of another puppy if she would return the diseased one. Upon learning that the returned animal would be shipped back to New York without medical attention, she refused.

There is almost as much risk involved in buying cats from pet shops. Two persons who had each purchased a cat from a Salt Lake City area pet shop several months apart discovered the animals had severe cases of ringworm. The Humane Society of Utah discovered that a municipal health inspector had given the store a clean bill of health during the period between the purchases.

In one case purchased from a McLean, Va., pet shop for children 2 and 7 years old died of feline distemper 4 days later. When informed of the presence of the highly contagious virus by a veterinarian, shop employees refused to remove other cats from sale.

Most pet shops attempt to relieve buyers' anxieties about sickness by telling them the animals have been vaccinated and dewormed. But a former puppy mill employee said in an article in Dogs magazine that the vaccine used by puppy mills is usually ordered through the mail and seldom effective because it isn't fresh and hasn't been kept

HSUS assisted the Animal Rescue League of Berks County, Pa., in getting the owner of this Pennsylvania puppy mill convicted. HSUS Chief Investigator Frank J. McMahon inspects the makeshift cages where collies, pekingese, Chihuahuas, Doberman pinschers, Samoyeds, and other purchased bitches spent their lives producing litters for pet shops. The court ordered the closing of the operation, and the league removed all but animals for research.

The wholesaler receives an order, he puts the puppy in a crate that resembles a lettuce crate, usually two animals per crate, and trucks them to the nearest air express terminal. The crates are then loaded into the cargo compartment of an aircraft whenever space is available and started on their way. After any necessary changes of planes or layovers, the animals arrive at an air express terminal in the city closest to their final destination and await pickup or delivery to the pet shop.

This route, from the breeder to the pet shop, is so full of potential diseases and traumas for the young animal that his chances of becoming a happy, responsive pet may have already been destroyed. Yet, the average consumer believes that an animal purchased from a clean, sparkling pet shop is bound to be a good pet. But take a look at the dangers that have confronted him along the way.

At the breeder's—improper feeding and inexperienced or inadequate care of mother during pregnancy or of puppy after birth.

At the collector's—inadequate feeding (a frequent danger, as it places the wholesaler a lot in the public eye for improper money) and exposure to the germs and viruses from the many other puppies on the same grounds.

In transit—exposure to the elements while awaiting flights, during layovers, and while awaiting pickup; exposure to the heat or cold in cargo compartments that frequently have little temperature control or air circulation when airborne; trauma from the darkness, noise, and vibration of the plane; exposure to germs and viruses of other animals being shipped; injury from inadequate crating.

After undergoing this ordeal, puppies often become exhausted or develop stress that makes them more susceptible to disease, infection, or pneumonia. Veterinarian and psychologist Michael W. Fox warns that puppies usually develop some infection as a consequence of the stress reaction but that it may not come to the surface until 2 weeks later. By that time, many of the puppies are already in the hands of new owners, the vast majority of whom have not been warned of such danger.

On two separate occasions this winter, Washington D.C., area humane societies rescued a total of almost 100 puppies from a cold REA warehouse at National Airport, where they were shuttled to await available cargo space. Twenty-five of the animals were sent to veterinarians for treatment of coccidiosis, distemper, bronchi-
This is an Iowa puppy mill, where huskies, cairn terriers, malamutes, keeshondens, etc., were kept in a shed and whelped for pet shops. An American Kennel Club investigator found the bodies of a fully grown dachshund and several puppies on a nearby garbage pile.

A Greensboro, N.C., veterinarian told HSUS that every one of several hundred puppies he has examined that originated at puppy mills had bronchitis. "Fifty per cent of the dogs brought to me from a certain pet shop in town are dead within five days," he declared.

HSUS last year assisted in closing a puppy mill outside St. Louis that had received 1,000 complaints of inferior and sick puppies to the St. Louis Better Business Bureau. When McMahon visited the facility, which sold directly to individuals, he found unsanitary conditions, small cages, and a lack of food and water. A mixed cocker spaniel-poodle puppy he purchased died of distemper 6 days later.

Officials of HSUS and the Animal Rescue League of Berks County, Pa., in 1972 closed a Reading, Pa., puppy mill that sold crippled puppies to stores of two pet shop chains. They reported finding 60 breeding col­ies, 120 puppies, 10 Chihuahuas, cocker spaniels, Doberman pinchers, and keeshondens in small, filthy, makeshift cages. When asked how long the 
None of the major dog breeding states has laws governing breeding operations. There are even fewer laws governing pet shops.

A private veterinarian found that this Doberman pinscher puppy had an upper respiratory infection when he was purchased from a Docktor Pet Center in Maryland. He was bred and whelped on a working farm in Iowa.

There are a few things you can do to help protect animals in the pet trade.

- **You Can Help!**
  - You can assist in correcting the abuses of the pet industry by participating in one or more of the following actions:
    - Report any bad experiences with pet shops or breeders to (a) your local or state consumer protection agency, your mayor, city manager, or city councilman, (b) your local humane society, and (c) HSUS.
    - Write to the following government official to express your support of HSUS's proposal to establish a standard health certificate and a veterinarian accreditation system: Dr. T. Swindle, D.V.M., Senior Staff Veterinarian, USDA/APHIS Veterinary Services, Federal Center Bldg., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

- **Recommendations**
  - Every state should enact an effective law to govern the operations of breeders, wholesalers, and pet shops through a licensing and inspection program.
  - In states where such a law is not in effect, municipal ordinances should be enacted to govern the operations of pet shops and backyard breeders through licensing and inspection.
  - HSUS has proposed that the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (a) prepare a standard health certificate that would be required for every cat or dog purchased from an independent breeder for resale, and (b) develop a veterinarian accreditation system to ensure that only qualified, ethical veterinarians sign the health certificates, and (c) an independent veterinarian shall certify that the pet shops and animal wholesalers are in compliance with the laws of the state.

- **For More**
  - Send a contribution to The Humane Society to help its efforts to protect animals in the pet trade.

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These beagles were among 80 breeding dogs used by a Missouri woman to produce 400 puppies within 6 months. The pens had no gates to permit easy cleaning of the quarters or careful examination of the dogs. An American Kennel Club investigator convinced the breeder to reduce her breeding stock by one-half.

Avoid impulse buying. Look at several animals before making the final selection. Consider carefully the responsibilities of pet ownership, including the need to be home at regular hours, the need to walk dogs regularly, and the need to have the pet cared for in your absence.

Buy a pet only when you can learn the origin of the animal. If you can see the dam and sire and inspect the breeder's quarters, you will have a better idea of the bloodlines, temperament, and condition of the animal you are buying. If the animal has originated in your area, there is less danger of the animal having been exposed to disease and trauma.

Check with the local humane society, Better Business Bureau, or consumer protection agency to see if there are complaints about the seller.

Avoid franchise or chain operations. You don't need the problems they can provide for you!

Visit your local animal shelter or pound to see the excellent animals they have available. They can be purchased for a small fee if you meet the requirements for adoption, and you will be saving the animal from an almost certain death because of the large surplus of cats and dogs.

Select a happy, active animal. It is more likely to be a good pet than the sad, withdrawn animal.

Be sure to obtain a warranty that will permit you to obtain reimbursement for any necessary veterinary expenses incurred within the first 14 days after sale.

Immediately take the new pet to a veterinarian for a complete checkup.

Additional copies of this report are available at 5¢ each. Write PET SHOP REPORT, The Humane Society of the United States, 1604 K St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20006.