3 states that produce more than half the puppies sold in U.S. pet stores—Missouri, Oklahoma, and Iowa—enact laws to crack down on abusive commercial breeding operations.

677 dogs and 9 other animals are saved from squalor and neglect by HSUS teams deployed to puppy mill raids; staff assist local authorities in an additional 4 raids involving 544 dogs.

A 1,000-store milestone is reached when hundreds more retailers take the Puppy Friendly Pet Stores Pledge not to sell puppies.

We are gratified to serve as the emergency shelter and headquarters for the rescue. I can’t say enough about the HSUS staff who made it happen. With poise, power, and grace, they harnessed and coordinated a fairly darn complex set of logistical, legal, and communications issues. Pets Alive performed spay/neuter surgeries yesterday on nine of the rescued dogs. They will never be forced to breed again.

—James McNamara, former executive director of the Pets Alive spay/neuter clinic in Indiana, which helped The HSUS with a December rescue.

While most dogs at a fly-infested, feces-covered Carriere, Miss., puppy mill shrank in fear, a few sought attention from their rescuers. “Every time I bent over to get another dog,” recalls The HSUS’s Michelle Cascio (above), “one of the terriers would come up and lick me on the chin.” Rescued animals are brought to emergency shelters on their way to new homes (at left).
Missouri: The Most Important Battle Yet

Feet bloodied from wire cages. Rotten teeth. Skin and eye and ear infections. Parasites. Bones protruding. When the people vote on an issue, the majority rules, and the elected officials should respect that,” says Michael Markarian, chief operating officer for The HSUS. And in the case of Tessa (shown below), hair so matted that her back legs were snarled together, toenails so overgrown they curled into her foot pads, and gum disease so severe that all but one of her teeth were eventually pulled.

These are the symptoms of weak laws that allow the puppy mill industry to flourish unchecked. The cure is clear—better laws to regulate the 10,000 mass breeding operations across the nation. But getting those laws approved is a state-by-state battle.

In 2010, The HSUS won one of its greatest victories: citizens’ approval of a measure to require breeders in Missouri, the state with the most puppy mills, to keep no more than 50 breeding dogs and give them adequate food, water, shelter, space, exercise, veterinary care, and rest between breeding cycles. Winning passage of the new law involved collecting more than 190,000 signatures to get the measure on the ballot and combating a smear campaign by the Missouri Farm Bureau. As soon as Proposition B passed in November, state legislators set about trying to undo it; five months later, Gov. Jay Nixon signed a repeal bill and enacted what he termed “compromise” legislation that dramatically weakened the original provisions of Prop B. But The HSUS isn’t going away without a fight; we plan to strengthen the surviving Prop B protections, hold officials accountable for their stated support of strong enforcement laws, and launch a 2012 ballot initiative to preserve citizen-approved laws.

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