Thousands of dogs, unloved, starving, ill-housed; thousands of puppies, shipped like so much merchandise at too young an age; thousands of consumers, unknowingly buying sick dogs; these are the grim truths of the puppy-mill trade.

PUPPY MILLS EXPOSED
Completely exposed to the blazing sun and the freezing rain and snow, puppy-mill dogs are bred and reared repeatedly and in foul, un­sanitary conditions. Puppies born in such puppy mills are often ill, frightened, filthy, and doomed to suffer and die. Many are left at a shelter, but the great majority are simply killed.

HSUS investigator Bob Baker describes the horrors of puppy mills at the Los Angeles press conference at which HSUS President John A. Hoyt (far right) announced the HSUS boycott.

**Maybe they thought they could continue to get away with it. Maybe they thought that, as hidden as they were in sparsely populated, rural areas, no one would notice.**

...no one would notice away with it. Maybe they thought law-enforcement officials would continue to turn a blind eye to the many violations of state and federal laws.

HSUS investigators, visiting puppy mills less than an hour after HSUS investigators have found numerous violations of AWA requirements, have reported nothing. One USDA inspector even had her own puppy mill: the USDA knew about it, yet did nothing! Only after the HSUS boycott drew attention to the issue and the inspector's puppy mill was shown on ABC's "20/20" did the reign.

In 1984, the General Accounting Office, the investigative branch of the federal government, found major deficiencies in the enforcement of the AWA regulations concerning puppy mills. The USDA pledged to do better—and nothing happened. In 1989, the USDA created a new division, the Regulatory Enforcement/Animal Care Program (RE/AC), which was to work exclusively on animal welfare. It, too, has been a dismal failure. In RE/AC's first twelve months, there were fewer violation cases reported than in the previous twelve months!

T he HSUS had been monitoring the USDA's poor performance and pushing for better enforcement of the AWA for over a decade. But, after years of apathetic performance and broken pledges, it was time to go straight to the consumers—puppy mills and the people associated with puppy-mill puppy mills.

Although all fifty states have anticyclic laws that should prevent neglect and mistreatment of dogs in puppy mills, such laws are seldom enforced in rural areas, where most puppy mills are located. One estimate is that there are 5,000 puppy mills in the six Midwest states targeted by the HSUS boycott, breeding approximately 500,000 puppies annually.

There is also a federal law that protects animals from ill-treatment in the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), which requires wholesale commercial dealers to be licensed, inspected, and regulated to ensure humane standards of care. But the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the federal agency responsible for the AWA's enforcement, has been outrageously lax in its enforcement. Many of the worst puppy mills in the nation are major suppliers to puppy-mill breeders.

"Today Show" announced the boycott the morning of the news conference, and local TV stations were able to pick up HSUS footage of puppy mills from the satellite.

National television talk and news shows pursued the story and ran with it, tapping HSUS investigators as experts on the issue. In addition to appearing on the "20/20" segment, which showed moving shots of sick and frightened puppy-mill dogs, Farr released a report from the California Assembly Office of Research that showed that a dog purchased in a pet store was three times more likely to be ill if it came from an out-of-state puppy-mill breeder than if it originated from a local California breeder. Hoyt charged, "The pet industry has acted as though these dogs are merely commodities to be shipped and marketed like refrigerators or toasters. And consumers unknowingly buy sick dogs. This is inexcusable."

The news conference, part of a presentation beamed by satellite throughout the nation, was covered by Cable News Network as well as local television stations across the country. NBC's appeared on the "Geraldo" show, where he delivered powerful on-camera rebuttals to puppy-mill breeders' and brokers' claims that HSUS concerns about animal treatment were exaggerated. When one breeder tried to duck responsibility by blaming puppy-mill conditions on the USDA's poor enforcement of animal-welfare regulations, Baker responded that the USDA is like a police force; even if a policeman doesn't catch you breaking the law, you're still responsible for your actions.

Other national television shows ran puppy mill segments...
All the publicity had a marked effect in Kansas, where Kansas Attorney General Bob Stephan's initial reaction was to call people who were concerned about inhumane conditions in Kansas puppy mills "bozos"; he declared, "Any self-respecting Kansan ought to tell them to go to hell." He soon had to change his tune, however, as the public made it clear that it did not share that attitude. Stephan, acting on the recommendations of HSUS Midwest Regional Director Wendell Maddox, agreed to a raid that closed down a Kansas puppy mill, and its owners were later convicted of cruelty to animals and violating the 1988 Kansas animal-dealers law. (This good law, which The HSUS had been instrumental in getting passed and was designed to ensure more humane treatment for dogs in puppy mills, has suffered from lack of enforcement and an apathetic attitude on the part of state officials.)

More raids followed: In August, 30 dogs were seized from an Arkansas City, Kansas, kennel; in October, 126 dogs were taken from a kennel in Ottawa, Kansas. This was promising action, but the Kansas legislature, attempting to cover up rather than clean up, had earlier enacted a law that makes it a felony to photograph a puppy-mill facility. This move will make future investigations more difficult and shift more responsibility to law-enforcement agencies, traditionally the worst prosecutors of animal-crucelty cases. It does not bode well for the dogs that continue to suffer in Kansas puppy mills, but, through our boycott, we hope to pressure states, including Kansas, to enforce the animal regulations they have and to pass legislation where none exists. "If consumers make it unprofitable to breed puppies in these factories, we're confident these appalling conditions will end," says John A. Hoyt.

Through years of undercover investigations that have exposed conditions at hundreds of midwestern puppy mills, years of pressuring the USDA for better enforcement of the AWA, years of fighting to get good legislation passed to protect the animals trapped in the puppy-mill trade, The HSUS has proven its commitment to these suffering animals. We will continue to work on behalf of puppy-mill dogs (we still hope to force the USDA to enforce its regulations more vigorously) and to bring pressure to bear on state and federal officials to stop the mass production and exportation of sick and traumatized dogs. There must be vigorous enforcement of existing laws and regulations or the establishment of new requirements, if necessary, in order to close down puppy mills and ensure humane treatment of dogs trapped in commercial kennels. Through our boycott and the attention it has garnered, we've turned the spotlight on puppy mills; now it's time for them to clean up their act.

Support the HSUS boycott. Tell everyone not to buy pet-store dogs that come from Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania.

Write "Letters to the Editor" to your local newspapers, asking readers not to buy pet-store dogs from the boycotted states. Visit your local pet store to determine where it obtains its puppies. Don't be misled by claims that its dogs are not puppy-mill dogs. Insist on seeing the AKC papers or the interstate health certificate accompanying each puppy. While the existence of such documents does not guarantee the quality or health of a puppy, the papers will list the breeder's and/or wholesaler's name and address.

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. This act requires commercial breeders raising dogs for pet stores to be licensed, regulated, and inspected by the USDA. Express your outrage that the USDA has been extremely negligent in the enforcement of the AWA. Members of Congress can be contacted: The Honorable ______, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC 20510.

One of the worst puppy-mill states is Kansas. Write to Kansas governor Joan Finney, asking her to end the cruelty of puppy mills now. Suggest that she impose fees on puppy mills that could be used for enforcement of the Kansas law that regulates these facilities. Inform her that, until she takes action against these cruel breeding kennels, you will urge others to boycott Kansas dogs. Governor Finney's address is: State Capitol, Second Floor, Topeka, KS 66612.

Finally, help The HSUS continue its fight to help all animals that suffer at the hands of man—including those in puppy mills. Please use the enclosed postage-paid envelope to send your contribution today.