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How Much Is that Doggie In the Window?

It’s a complaint that West Coast regional investigators receive all too frequently: a sick puppy, an anguished customer, an unrepentant pet store. The issue is one of needed protections for consumers as well as animals. Approximately 400,000 dogs are sold in the nation’s pet stores each year, and, while some pet-shop puppies come from reputable local breeders, too often their lives begin in the decrepit, cramped confines of a puppy mill. The Humane Society of the United States has been working diligently in recent years to expose the gross cruelty associated with the pet industry. For the past year, Regional Investigator Kurt Lapham has been documenting the problems in the retail pet trade.

In California, one of the nation’s largest markets for puppy-mill puppies, pet-shop operators are currently mandated by state law to (among other provisions) “take reasonable care to release for sale, trade, or adoption only those pet animals which are free of disease or injuries.” Additionally, retail sellers of dogs and cats must provide the purchaser with a written statement, prescribed by the Department of Consumer Affairs, containing the following information: the origin (if obtained continued on page 2

These puppies will soon be displayed behind the sterile stainless-steel bars of a retail pet store—far removed from the conditions of their birth.

INSIDE
• Reprieve for Mountain Lions
• Hope for Tule Elk
• Around the Region
• Legislative Update

It’s Time To Speak Out Against Fur

Furs are fashionable. Furs are fun. Furs are symbols of affluence, status, and maturity. Shocked? Don’t be, for furs are any or all of these things to people who easily succumb to slick advertising. It is a simple matter of how a basic principle of advertising works. Create an image or fantasy with the product built into it, present it in a wide range of formats that will make it seem attractive, and then reinforce the message as often as possible.

The fur industry has been employing this basic principle, quite successfully, for the better part of this century. It has had to, because furs aren’t necessary to keep people clothed and warm. If it had not been able to draw people into the fantasy it created, the fur industry would have died a natural death some time ago—as it should have. The opening statements above are the essence of what American consumers are told to believe in advertising throughout the year, and especially during the fall. It is the fur industry’s way of keeping itself alive by artificial means, totally reliant on people who are easily influenced by expensive advertising and whose vanity will lead to the expenditure of large sums of money.

Today, consumers are better educated continued on page 4
from a USDA-licensed dog breeder), date of birth (unless unknown because of source), a record of immunizations; and a record of any known disease or sickness affecting the animal at the time of sale. This information must also be verbally disclosed to the buyer by puppies and the emotional burdens of the puppy-mill trade is to be corrected. The nearly $4 billion pet industry, fearful of losing its grasp on a highly lucrative business, is expending a great deal of time and money to fight any legislative efforts to improve conditions. The WCRO will continue to monitor pet stores in our region and work to gain the cooperation of those individuals who support their vulnerable charges to suffering and neglect or rip off consumers for the sake of profit.

If you have encountered problems with the purchase of a puppy from a pet store, the WCRO would like to hear about them. Please write to: Pet Store Investigation, HSUS/ West Coast Regional Office, 1713 J St., Suite 218, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 447-3295. We will send you an information packet on how to deal with your problem.

Puppy mill dogs may spend their entire lives in wire cages such as this.

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Problems like these seem to be on the increase, and because improvements in the puppy-mill trade are occurring at a snail’s pace (when they occur at all), the 1988 California legislature took a hard look at improving the situation in their state. AB 4500, authored by Assemblyman Sam Farr, would have prohibited the importation of any puppy under the age of twelve weeks into the state of California for the purpose of commercial resale. (For more information on AB 4500, see puppy-mill bill, see “Legislation,” page 3.) AB 4500 would have helped to stop some of the physical abuses endured by the animals and the emotional burdens of the new pet owner with a sick animal. Its failure before the California legislature points out that much more work is to be done if the suffering inherent in the puppy-mill trade is to be corrected. The nearly $4 billion pet industry, fearful of losing its grasp on a highly lucrative business, is expending a great deal of time and money to fight any legislative efforts to improve existing conditions. The WCRO will continue to monitor pet stores in our region and work to gain the cooperation of those individuals who support their vulnerable charges to suffering and neglect or rip off consumers for the sake of profit.

Whether sick or healthy, however, a puppy’s “shelf-life” (often determined by cuteness) is only a few short weeks. Heavy dependence upon impulse pur­chases, pet stores showcase their “magnificent” in glistening kennels alongside racks of the latest in pet accessories. Consumers usually are not even aware, however, that they need little or nothing about, armed with leashes, bowls, special diet, toys, training, and a warranty. Unfortunately, as many consumers find, should the puppy become ill or show signs of physical or psychological abnormalities, that warranty may not mean much. Faced with rising veterinary bills and a growing attachment to their new pet, owners find that, although some stores honor warranties by replacing or exchanging sick animals, rarely will they cover expenses for veterinary treatment. The pet store, it is far less “liable” to reclaim and destroy a sick animal—and receive a credit from the breeder—to than shell out the money for vet bills. For the animal, it can mean resale to another unsuspecting customer or death by questions means.

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DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

by Char Drennon

The West Coast Regional Office clashed with the California veterinary establishment once again this spring, this time over two sets of regulations proposed by the Board of Examiners in Veterinary Medicine. The regulations are unrelated, except that both will seriously hamper pet owners' rights, and it was for that reason that I testified against them and also enlisted the aid of California state legislators and local humane societies.

Early in 1988, the WCRO discovered that the Board of Examiners had proposed and passed a set of regulations that detailed a cite-and-fine structure for violations committed by veterinarians and unlicensed persons practicing veterinary medicine. One section of the cite-and-fine regulations stated that a veterinarian would simply be fined if, while in violation of the Medical Practice Act, he were to cause the substantial injury or death of an animal. His license might not be in jeopardy. Since the board had already passed these regulations, the only way of stopping them was to intervene with the director of the Department of Consumer Affairs, who had to sign them in order to finalize the board's actions. I contacted several state legislators and local humane societies, and, after hearing from people statewide who are opposed to the regulations, the director has refused to sign them unless the provisions mentioned above are removed.

When the legislation enabling the passage of those regulations was signed into law in 1986, it also contained a provision stating that the related fines and disciplinary measures would be confidential and unavailable for public viewing. Thus, consumers would be unable to find out whether a veterinarian had been disciplined for past violations. At our request, Assemblyman Jack O'Connell had amended his bill, A.B. 2756, so that it would remove that confidentiality clause from state law.

Just when it seemed that the cite-and-fine problem had been solved, the board proposed yet another set of harmful regulations. This set would prohibit anyone but veterinarians and their technicians from cleaning pets' teeth, and, therefore, subject laymen who are removing tartar to criminal prosecution.

Almost 100 percent of veterinarians insist on anesthetizing animals before cleaning their teeth—groomers and lay people do not. Many pet owners don't want to take the risk of having their animals anesthetized, and some can't have them anesthetized for health reasons. Testimony at a recent hearing on these regulations demonstrated that lay people are safely removing tartar and are referring any serious problems to veterinarians.

Should the board pass these dental regulations, and it seems likely that they will, we must once again go to Michael Kelley, the director of the Department of Consumer Affairs, or to the Office of Administrative Law and ask for a veto. If you wish to protest the dental regulations, please write to Governor George Deukmejian, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814. The WCRO will continue to fight legislation and regulations like the ones I have described that are unnecessary and/or anti-consumer and anti-pet.

Fur continued from page 1

and more aware. Fewer are allowing the fur industry and its collective advertising to make decisions for them about what is fashionable or humane and morally correct. It matters little whether the animals that died for that coat were cruelly trapped and clubbed to death or were raised on a ranch and electrocuted. Today's consumers are aware that animals suffered and died needlessly in order to make it. For most of us that is enough. But is it enough to just say no? When we see people wearing fur we can pity them for being slaves to their own vanity and victims of unremitting advertising. We can be embarrassed for them as they stroll about in public, caught up in some fantasy created for them by an advertising agency. At the same time, we're not indifferent to the suffering and cruelty involved in making the garment. Our silence accomplishes nothing. We need to say, "You should be ashamed to wear fur;" to those who do, for they are ultimately the ones who are responsible for allowing such unnecessary cruelty and death to continue. It's that simple. And it's time we started saying it.

The Regional Report is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States
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(916) 447-3295
Charlene Drennon, Director

The HSUS West Coast Regional Office serves California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. All contributions made to The HSUS West Coast Regional Office will be used for regional purposes and are tax-deductible.

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Reflect for a moment....

HOW CAN I HELP ANIMALS EVEN WHEN NO LONGER SHARE THEIR WORLD?

By your bequest for animal protection to The Humane Society of the United States, your will can provide for animals after you're gone. Naming The HSUS demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the Society for this task. We will be happy to send information about our animal programs and material that will assist in planning a will.

Please send will information to:
Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________
City ____________________________ State ________
Zip code ____________
Mail in confidence to Murdaugh S. Madden, Vice President/General Counsel, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.