

# Puppy mills

What qualifies a dog breeder as a puppy mill?

Currently, the Department of Agriculture regulates welfare standards for commercial breeding operations. These regulations are an essential attempt to reduce the prevalent physical and/or emotional suffering that dogs endure during their lives under the ownership of breeders whose monetary goals and lack of training and education create miserable environments for these animals. However, small-scale breeders who sell puppies directly to the public through the internet can escape licensing requirements, avoid inspections, and the penalties for violations of animal welfare standards. The veterinary community believes that Congress has the power and obligation to correct this issue.

Since 2013 veterinarians, influential animal welfare organizations, retailers, and pet industry associations have united in targeting puppy mills that subject puppies and dogs to inhumane living conditions and substandard health care. One of the coalition's first steps has been to collectively decide on a definition for puppy mills, which is: **"A dog breeding operation, which offers dogs for monetary compensation or remuneration, in which the physical, psychological and or behavioral needs of the dogs are not being fulfilled due to inadequate housing, shelter, staffing, nutrition, socialization, sanitation, exercise, veterinary care, and or inappropriate breeding."** (AAHA, 2013). This definition along with the amended Pet Animal Welfare Statute, which "expands the USDA's authority to seek injunctions against unlicensed dog and cat dealers" (AVMA, 2005) would subject small-scale breeders to laws and regulations that promote healthier and happier dogs/puppies while also decreasing the burden on animal shelters and rescue organizations. Unfortunately, the lack of morals and ethics in breeding operations imposes a heavy burden on society through overbreeding and the inhumane treatment of animals.

## References

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