

Voice of the People

The price of a puppy

Christmas is traditionally a time for joy, celebration, good food and — unfortunately — pet-store puppies.

The uninformed and impulsive pet-store puppy buyer would be shocked to see where some of these puppies come from. While the pups are lying in small pet store cubicles for weeks at a time, their parents face a longer term of punishment: a forgotten life in dark, freezing barns, sheds and trailers. Their home is a small wire-floored cage with barely room to turn around. They get no exercise other than constant barking and banging off the sides of their cage. The females are bred twice a year until they are no longer productive and then are discarded like broken machinery.

A Richland County puppy mill breeder I visited this October told me his

breeding selections are based on what “designer puppy” is selling at pet stores. He mixes and matches parents with no concern for genetics or health issues. It’s all about the profits and not what the consumer will have to spend for medicines, treatments or euthanasia. He said his puppies go to pet stores in Madison and Milwaukee via a puppy broker when they are 8 weeks old. A large trailer contained cages hanging on the wall in which newborns were afforded the “luxury” of heat from kerosene lamps.

The puppy mill industry exists because of pet stores selling puppies. Reputable breeders don’t sell their dogs in pet stores. If a Christmas dog is in your plans, be sure to do your research, visit the breeder, and ask to see the parents and the conditions they live in.

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