

Tennessee Humane Pet Store Ordinances

Protecting communities from the puppy mill pipeline

puppy mill (noun): Breeding of dogs in facilities where profit is clearly given priority over the health and well-being of the dogs, where there is no interest in or effort toward addressing welfare problems. *-American Humane Society*

A humane pet store ordinance offers a balanced policy approach to addressing concerns related to commercially bred puppies and kittens in retail settings. By restricting the retail sale of commercially sourced animals while preserving opportunities for pet stores to operate through products, services, and shelter partnerships, cities can strengthen consumer protections, support responsible businesses, and promote more humane outcomes.

1 A humane pet store ordinance helps reduce demand for puppy mill puppies.

- Many pet stores routinely display young puppies sourced from large-scale commercial breeders, where animal welfare standards may be minimal or deeply concerning.
- Public records show that the vast majority of puppy-selling pet stores source the most of their puppies from large scale commercial breeders and brokers, many with harmful animal welfare records.
- Reputable breeders commonly place puppies directly with carefully screened homes rather than through third-party retail environments.

2 A humane pet store ordinance helps disrupt the commercial breeding pipeline supplying pet stores.

- Puppies sold in pet stores are commonly sourced from commercial breeding operations, transported long distances while still very young, and housed in retail environments that can expose them to stress and communicable illness.
- Puppies sold through pet stores may experience increased exposure to illness due to factors associated with commercial breeding and long-distance transport. In a CDC investigation, 95% of tested pet store puppies had been treated with antibiotics.
- A federally licensed breeder can still operate as a high-volume commercial breeding facility. Licensing does not guarantee humane conditions or responsible breeding practices.

numbers worth noting

500

The number of localities that have enacted this policy (including Nashville, Franklin, & Smyrna)¹

\$25M

The estimated annual cost to Florida consumers linked to sick puppies sold through pet stores.²

90%

Roughly the number of puppies in pet stores that are linked to puppy mills³



Because Tennessee has limited statewide regulation of commercial breeding, local governments play an important role in shaping animal sourcing standards that protect animal welfare and community wellbeing.

3 A humane pet store ordinance helps protect consumers from a range of problems.

- Pet store puppies are frequently marketed as responsibly bred, despite limited transparency surrounding many commercial breeding and transport operations.
- Puppies sourced through commercial pet store supply chains may face increased risk of health issues, which can lead to unexpected veterinary expenses for consumers, and additional strain on families and shelters.
- The CDC identified a multi-state outbreak of multi drug-resistant *Campylobacter* infections affecting 118 people, linked to contact with puppies from pet stores.⁴
- When consumers are unable to pay the upfront cost of a puppy, pet stores often offer third-party financing options. Consumer advocacy groups have reported that some of these loans carry extremely high annual percentage rates, in some cases approaching 188%.⁵

4 A humane pet store ordinance does not limit pet ownership or responsible businesses.

- The U.S. pet industry is over \$100 billion, mostly driven by products and services—not animal sales. Many pet retailers have shifted to grooming, training, and daycare services.
- Residents will still have multiple avenues for acquiring companion animals, including adoption from shelters and rescues, as well as direct placement from responsible breeders.

behind the sale



A French bulldog puppy at the Petland store in Novi, Michigan with a congenital defect that typically requires surgery (HWA)



A puppy mill owned by Lou Ann Brown in Missouri sold to Puppies for Less. (HWA)



A boxer puppy at the PetCenter in Old Bridge, NJ (owned by Petland) appeared noticeably thin. (HWA)



Dogs at Margaret Manning's USDA-licensed puppy mill. (HWA)

¹<https://bestfriends.org/pet-care-resources/humane-pet-sales-laws-state#Tennessee>

²<https://www.humaneworld.org/en/blog/sick-pets-sold-florida-cost-25-million>

³<https://www.animallaw.info/article/detailed-discussion-commercial-breeders-and-puppy-mills>

⁴<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6737a3.htm>

⁵<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/puppies-predatory-loans-pet-stores-puppy-mills-easypay-tab-bank-fdic>

