

Photo taken at a puppy mill that sold puppies to multiple puppy stores nationwide. / USDA, 2022



32,000 fewer breeding dogs

are now caged in USDA-licensed puppy mills than ten years ago, indicating stopping the sale of puppies in pet shops has lessened demand.

8 states and over 500 localities

prohibit the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops.

DENVER HUMANE PET SHOP ORDINANCE

BACKGROUND

The puppy mill-to-pet shop pipeline is a nightmare for animals and consumers, which is why 8 states and over 500 localities have banned the sale of puppies in pet stops, including **Fort Collins, Littleton, Englewood, Commerce City and 20 other Colorado cities.**

There are currently no puppy-selling pet stores in Denver, but the market remains open to this cruel industry, and an infamous puppy mill retailer has eyes on Colorado.

THE PROBLEM WITH PUPPY MILL STORES



Puppy mills: Public records show that puppy stores (including those in the Denver area) source puppies from large-scale, inhumane commercial breeders with terrible animal welfare records. *Even USDA or state licensed breeders often keep dogs in cruel conditions.*



The Pipeline: Pet shop puppies are born into cruel and unsanitary conditions, taken from their mothers at just 7-8 weeks old, crammed into cages and trucked across the country near other stressed and sick puppies, and then placed in pet shop cages like products.



Misleading sales tactics: Pet shops often sell puppies for thousands of dollars by lying about their breeders and making false health guarantees. *Colorado's transparency law is no match for telling customers what they want to hear when they have a puppy in their arms.*



Sick puppies: Pet shop puppies have the health deck stacked against them. Their new families often end up with a sick pet, high veterinary bills, and, too often, the heartache of their new pet dying.



Predatory lending: Few can afford a pet shop puppy outright, so sales staff push financing through third party lenders. [The National Consumer Law Center warns of puppy loans with up to 189% APR.](#)



Zoonotic disease: [The American Medical Association](#) has sounded the alarm about the public health risks of pet shop puppies, noting that antibiotic-resistant infections continue to sicken and hospitalize people.

LUCRATIVE HUMANE PET STORE MARKET



No pet shop needs to sell puppies. The massive retail pet industry (\$152 billion and counting) is dominated by the sale of pet products and services.



Stores that formerly sold puppies are now thriving with a products and services model, with some adding high demand services like grooming, training, or daycare.

ETHICAL PET SOURCES



Most residents will be able to obtain the pet of their choice by adopting from a local shelter or rescue, including breed specific rescues.



Residents can also seek out a [responsible breeder](#) who treats their dogs like pets and only ever sell directly to the public.



Most kennel clubs include in their Codes of Ethics that members shall not sell dogs to pet shops or other third parties.

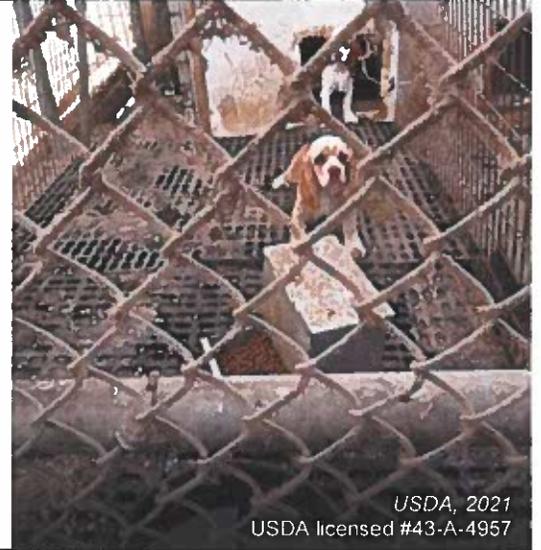
The Cruel Reality of USDA Puppy Mills

USDA's Shockingly Low Standards of Care

A compliant commercial breeder can:

- Confine dogs in cages only 6 inches larger than their bodies
- Keep hundreds of dogs in stacked or elevated cages
- Provide only wire flooring
- Expose dogs to frigid or sweltering temperatures for hours
- Breed dogs repeatedly and excessively, without limits
- Kill dogs they no longer want

In 2024, although the USDA found [over 800 violations](#) of these mere survival standards at dog breeding facilities they **did not relieve a single dog from suffering by removing them.**



USDA, 2021
USDA licensed #43-A-4957



MO Dept of Ag, 2022
USDA licensed #43-A-4436



MO Dept of Ag, 2022
USDA licensed #43-A-5445



USDA, 2023
USDA licensed #43-A-5497

USDA's Broken Oversight in Their Own Words

In 2025, the [USDA Inspector General](#) found:

- 80% of previously noncompliant dog breeders continued to violate USDA standards.
- Untimely and inconsistent inspections likely led to increased animal suffering.
- USDA failed to close 69% of complaints within established timeframes.

"The licensed dog breeders' pattern of continued noncompliance with AWA requirements poses a threat to the well-being and safety of their dogs, leaving them vulnerable to neglect, mistreatment, and suffering."

[USDA INSPECTOR GENERAL, 2025](#)

Weak enforcement had caused an "untold number of animals" to experience unnecessary suffering.

[USDA VETERINARIAN WHO OVERSAW INSPECTORS IN 27 STATES, 2019](#)

Inspectors should emphasize "education, not enforcement" and treat licensees "more as partners than as potential offenders."

[USDA ANIMAL CARE STAFF, 2019](#)

The USDA was "not able to ensure the overall health and humane treatment of animals at [dog breeding] facilities." The USDA did not consistently address complaints it received nor adequately document follow-up.

[USDA INSPECTOR GENERAL, 2021](#)

"It feels like your hands are tied behind your back. You can't do many things you're supposed to when it comes to protecting animals."

[USDA INSPECTOR FOR 20 YEARS, 2019](#)

PET STORE INDUSTRY TRENDS

When faced with legislation that would prohibit pet stores from selling puppies and kittens, puppy store owners and lobbyists argue the policy would put them out of business. Yet, their own industry repeatedly states that a products and services model is the key to pet retail success.

According to the [American Pet Products Association](#):

- Americans spent \$152 billion on their pets in 2024, with food, treats, and product spending dominating, along with services.
- For several years in a row, dog and cat retail sales were not tracked, indicating their insignificance to the overall retail pet industry.
- “The pet industry continues to demonstrate resilience, even amid economic uncertainty,” [said APPA president and CEO Pete Scott](#).
- [In-person shopping](#) “has seen a resurgence and is now preferred by nearly 50% of pet owners.”



According to [Pet Business Magazine](#), of the Top 25 Pet Retailers in North America *only one* (Petland) sells puppies. 2023 “was another year of phenomenal growth” with several top retailers adding more than 200 stores. More than half added at least one store, with several growing their store count by double-digits.

According to [Morgan Stanley](#), the pet industry is “poised to nearly triple to \$275 billion by 2030 thanks to a surge in new owners, favorable demographics and increased per-pet spending.” Pet owners, especially younger ones, are spending incrementally more on pet products and services and that growth will likely continue.

According to [Pet Product News](#), millennial pet owners prefer to shop in-person at **smaller, locally-owned pet shops** for treats (59%), toys (58%), and pet food (55%). Services also drive people to these stores.

SUCCESSFUL PET STORE CONVERSIONS

Dozens of pet shops have stopped selling puppies due to local or state laws and have successfully transitioned to a more humane model. Examples include:

[Love’s Pets](#), a store that’s been serving Conejo Valley in California since 1981, stopped selling puppies and solely focus on providing “the best all-natural and holistic foods and supplies.” They have a large retail selection and offer oven-baked dog treats, nutritional counseling, non-anesthetic dental clinics and offer dogs & cats for adoption.

[Love My Puppies](#), a puppy store operating in Long Island, NY for 18 years, stopped selling puppies and is now a full-service grooming salon for dogs and cats. To embrace their new business model, the owners changed the named to [Imperial Pet Salon](#).

[The Spoiled Pup](#) in Clark County, NV stopped selling puppies and now offers grooming services and pet products. After the ordinance passed, an employee who was [interviewed](#) said that it wouldn’t have much of an effect on them because the majority of their sales come from grooming and that they were prepared to find alternatives to replace the income from puppy sales.

[Pet’s Palace](#), a store impacted by the Louisville, KY ordinance, [declared](#) that it would become the city’s most ethical pet store and never sell a cat or dog again, “even if local ordinances change.” The store refers to itself as “Louisville’s oldest pet shop” and sells a wide range of pet food and supplies, as well as reptiles and birds.

[Critter Cabana](#) in Newberg, OR now offers a variety of goods and services, including grooming for dogs, cats and rabbits. The owners stated in Facebook post that they “value the spirit of the law” and proactively decided to stop selling puppies and kittens at their store and instead partner with local rescues and help connect community members with local breeders.

