

A SAMPLING OF DENVER-AREA PUPPY STORES' PUPPY MILL SUPPLIERS

Humane World researchers connected puppy import records from the Colorado Department of Agriculture or pet store disclosures/postings to federal and/or state inspection reports and photos to provide the following summaries. Email ajesse@humaneworld.org for the public records this summary is based on. (Public records show Colorado puppy stores also rely heavily on massive Midwest puppy mill brokers—middlemen dealers that resell weeks-old puppies from hundreds of different puppy mills.)

LINDA/STANLEY/BETHANY KORVER (ORANGE CITY, IA) PURCHASED BY: AQUATIC DOG (DENVER/ARAPAHOE COUNTY)

Humane World 2024 Horrible Hundred Report entry:

During two separate USDA inspections, in February and May 2023, USDA inspectors found a total of **22 violations** at the Korver kennel. Nine of the violations found in May 2023 were repeat violations that had not been corrected from the previous inspection, including **dirty and unsafe conditions, poor record-keeping on puppies, and accumulations of cobwebs, dust, debris and feces**. All 27 adult dogs were **lacking proof of veterinary examinations, rabies vaccines and other preventative tests**, according to the federal inspection report. Prior issues at the facility included a **lethargic and thin dog** found in 2016 who was so malnourished that inspectors could see her ribs and hip bones, and dirty conditions. The licensees did pass two inspections in late 2023. USDA #42-A-1448, IA #499.

USDA inspection photos:



**CINDY HUBERS/DA-PA KLI KENNELS (HARRISON, SD)
PURCHASED BY: AQUATIC DOG (DENVER/ARAPAHOE COUNTY)**

A 2025 USDA inspection report noted **221 dogs** at this kennel.

This puppy mill operator has a long list of USDA violations, including:

- A 2022 "direct" citation, meaning the dog was suffering at the time of the inspection, for denying veterinary care to a six year old bichon with a **heavy accumulation of tartar buildup on teeth**, producing a thick brown deposit, with inflammation and recession of gum tissue.
- A 2022 citation for **"a large amount of fecal buildup"** in enclosures occupied by dogs
- 2013 citations for dogs in need of veterinary care, including a Lhasa Apso with **"green-tinged mucus covering the entire eyeball"**, several other dogs with **"eye discolorations and/or mucus film over the eye"**, a Havanese with a **"golf-ball size of matted hair and fecal material dangling"** from his rear which was **"causing obvious discomfort"** and a Shih Tzu with large areas of **missing fur and unhealed wounds**.
- Repeatedly failing to make the facility available for inspection, as recently as 2023.

USDA inspection photos:



**LEON & ESTHER TROYER/PLEASANT HILL KENNELS (JAMESPORT, MO)
PURCHASED BY: PET CITY (COLORADO SPRINGS)**

A 2025 USDA inspection report noted **128 dogs** at this kennel.

Humane World's 2022 Horrible Hundred Report entry:

State inspectors found several issues during two different state inspections at Pleasant Hill Kennels in 2021. The first issues were noted in June 2021, when an inspector found that "the **left eye of a Wheaton puppy was cloudy and had clear drainage.**" When asked about the puppy, "The licensee stated the veterinarian had seen the puppy in the last week or two but she did not have any documentation of the exam." During the same inspection, inspectors gave the breeder a violation for a "health and husbandry" issue due to dirty water, stating that "The dogs housed in the outdoor enclosures had **water with algae growing in it.**" They also noted that the required program of veterinary care for the facility had expired in March 2021. When inspectors returned in August 2021, they found additional issues. Another dog, this time an adult Wheaton, had an **eye disorder with green discharge.** A



MO Dept. of Agriculture inspection photo

A photo taken that day by the inspector shows obvious, crusty-looking discharge that appears to have dried all around the eye. In addition, the licensee had not fully recorded treatments on the puppy who had the eye disorder in June, so it was unclear if the puppy had been properly treated. There was also a concern about the **scant weather protection** available: Some dogs had only a sheet of plastic used as a source of shade above their outdoor enclosures, and it was "torn and chewed." The inspector stated, "An adult Wheaton is able to jump and rip and chew the plastic." An inspection in September 2021 was compliant; there were more than 125 dogs on the property at the time. MO #AC002NJB.

**THOMAS EMARD (LA PLATA, NM)
PURCHASED BY: PERFECT PETS (CENTENTIAL)**

USDA violations include:

- 2025 citations for lack of contingency plan training ("Contingency plans and documentation for training of personnel are required to help ensure animal health and well-being in the event of an emergency or disaster."), a dog with "an ~1cm, moist, **pink mass near the inner corner of the right eye,** which the applicant states is being treated temporarily with eye drops per the veterinarian's recommendation" but no veterinary records.
- 2024 citations for failing to provide documentation of when the last visit was conducted by the attending veterinarian of the premises and when the last veterinary examination of adult dogs was conducted.
- 2022 citations for 24 dogs that have no identification and 8 unweaned puppies with no record of inventory



USDA inspection photo

FREEMAN P. HELMUTH/SUNRISE KENNELS (CORYDON, IA)
PURCHASED BY: PET CITY (COLORADO SPRINGS)

Humane World's 2024 Horrible Hundred Report entry:

Inspectors found problems with Sunrise Kennels during a state inspection and two USDA inspections in 2023. In late April 2023, the USDA found a pug puppy suffering from "poor eye health and nasal discharge." The puppy's condition was so dire that her left eye was "sealed shut by dry yellow colored discharge." The puppy also had discharge around the nostrils, and her right eye was "completely cloudy." The USDA noted that the puppy had not been evaluated by a veterinarian and was not receiving any treatment. There were about 90 dogs and puppies on the property at the time. When the USDA returned in November 2023, it found a hole chewed in the side of a bag of dog food, with evidence of rodent feces nearby. Sunrise Kennels has sold puppies to at least two Petland stores in recent years. After incurring the violations in 2023, it appears that a Freeman P. Helmuth obtained a new license at an adjacent address. Former USDA #42-A-1705, new USDA #42-A-1724, former IA #12181.

CLAIR & SUSAN CARLISLE/S&C FARMS (COLDWATER, KS)
PURCHASED BY: AQUATIC DOG (DENVER/ARAPAHOE COUNTY)

Humane World's 2020 Horrible Hundred Report entry:

In December 2019, S & C Farms received a direct violation, one of the most serious violations the USDA can give, for an injured dog who hadn't been treated by a veterinarian. The inspector wrote: "One adult female corgi (Tag WC16) was seen intermittently non-weight bearing on the left hind limb. When she was removed from the enclosure, multiple wounds were seen on all four feet. The wounds were reddened with hair loss around them and appeared to be in varying stages of healing. The injuries had not been observed by the licensee." In addition, several other problems were noted during the same inspection, including a failure to properly identify some of the dogs, which can lead to problems tracking veterinary care and ownership; some housing conditions that were unsafe, and "an excessive accumulation of excreta in all of the dog enclosures." When the USDA inspector asked the licensee when he had last cleaned the dogs' enclosures, the licensee reportedly admitted that "it had been a while. Several issues were also documented by state inspectors in July 2019, including holes that could injure the dogs' legs and some areas that had grime or weeds. There were 60 dogs and puppies on the premises at the time of the USDA inspection. USDA #48-A-1672; KS # CB000GK7.

A SAMPLING OF DENVER-AREA PUPPY STORE CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

The following consumer complaints describe common illnesses/genetic issues with pet shop puppies, often costing consumers immensely, both financially and emotionally.

Perfect Pets (Centennial), 2024 Yelp complaint: *I was a first time pet owner. I thought I did my research. 9 news covered them and said they used reputable breeders. I trusted that. I got my little Lucy from this store in 2020. She was three months old. She was from Angie and Casey Schaff of Nebraska Land Pets. Lucy had giardia the whole first year of her life. She developed bladder and kidney*

problems. She passed away at 4.5 years from multiple organ failure. She ate poop as a baby, which I learned meant she was from a puppy mill. I put so much into my little girl. She was a service animal. I spent over 16,000 on her during her short life. This should never have happened. These animals deserve better lives. I am more knowledgeable now. Please check the breeders. Her breeder has 220 breeding pups in 2020. That screams puppy mill! Please do better research than I. Don't trust that this store uses reputable breeders. Do your research!

She was on special food. She saw three veterinary specialists. The ultrasound showed she had small organs. Genetic. My vet said her demise was genetic and poor breeding. Which led me to my research.

Aquatic Dog (Denver/Arapahoe County), 2025 Yelp complaint: My husband and I were saving for a reputable breeder, but he fell in love. we purchased the dog last year to find out she has a genetic disorder, inoperable microvascular dysplasia. She was around 3k. Vet bills are now tripled what I bought her for just to gain a diagnosis and be told nothing can be done.

We looked up the old paperwork and found the breeders USDA license and name. This woman has a puppy mill with 89 breeder dogs, numerous complaints, is on multiple studies for the harmful effects of puppy mills listed as a offender, is even on 'buyer beware' lists. Yet, with all of that she is continuing to breed them and sell them to Aquatic Dog. Her name is everywhere as a terrible puppy mill owner and irresponsible breeder, uncaring that lethal inherited genetic traits are being passed on so they can make more \$\$.

We are saddened we will only get a year or two year with our puppy, but also happy to have met her. The most we can do is hope this petstore changes it's ways and recommend to never ever buy a puppy from this place. :(



Pet City (Colorado Springs), 2024 Yelp complaint: Update as my puppy from pet city approaches her second birthday. As she's aged, her vet has noted a few congenital health defects occur.

Firstly, my pup developed patellar luxation, a bone growth deformity of the knee that causes the knee cap to pop out of place. Unfortunately, the poor baby will need an expensive orthopedic surgery to correct the deformity and improve her overall quality of life. :(

Secondly, my pup has developed genetic skin conditions that can cause eczema-like patches on the skin.

Overall, these genetic abnormalities point to poor and unvetted breeding stock (meaning the breeder is likely not doing their due diligence). Sadly, this confirms the statement in my first review that my baby girl is indeed a puppy mill dog.

Please use caution when purchasing a puppy from Pet City. All I can say, expect to pay double the cost of your puppy within 1-3 years in order to correct genetic defects and prolong the healthy life of your pup

Pet Ranch (Thornton), 2025 Yelp complaint: PARVO puppies sold here!!!! March 8, 2025, I bought a King Cavalier puppy 5 days later she had Parvo, , the pet store manager "Bruno" said she would take care of it and through many emails nothing has been done. my dog was hospitalized and i was told she would not make it. she was tough and did make it. 3,000 dollars in hospital costs. She was in the pen with 2 other dogs, and I had animal control go there to see if they were ok they said they were removed not sure what that means but nowhere to be found (most likely dead)