

Puppy Mills, Part 2

Last month I was talking about puppy mills in general and in particular, the recent puppy mill busts in our local area. Under the same family umbrella, three locations were raided and about 600 dogs, most of them pregnant, were seized. This was an awakening experience as the abuse and neglect that dogs suffer in these places is unfathomable to most of us.

Other than the greedy people that operate these businesses, I believe the rest of us agree on one thing. We need to shut down every last one of these places. Our dog friends deserve so much better. The problem is that not everyone agrees on how to go about doing that.

Some think this includes the larger animal rights/welfare organizations, that legislation regarding the breeding of dogs is the way to go. I am not convinced that they are right. I am certainly not an expert on this subject but it seems to me that the current laws we have work pretty well, when enforced. In order to enforce the laws we already have, authorities need

to know where to find these places. The public must pay attention to what is going on around them and be willing to report suspected violators so they can be inspected or raided. That is how our local busts came about recently. The dogs have been rescued, the business shut down and

the owners are being prosecuted. The system worked.

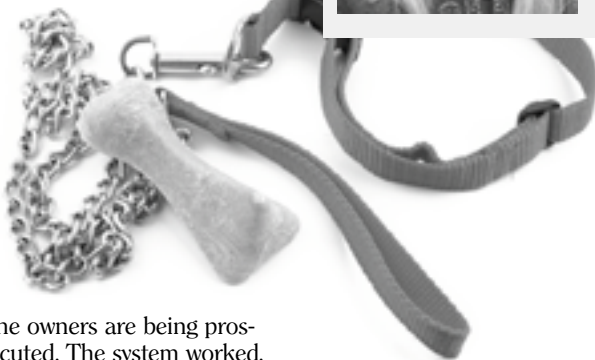
Currently there is legislation pending in our state, a direct result of this latest puppy mill bust, to produce stronger laws. There is major opposition about this coming from many, many responsible dog enthusiasts. I have read much about their objections and they make very legitimate points.

I would like to offer an-



Our Animal Friends

by Martha Norwalk



other solution, which I think makes more sense. I won't say it will be easy but it is simple and it will work. If there is no market for these puppies, there is no way to make money breeding mass quantities and the puppy mills will be forced to shut themselves down.

Okay then, so how do we go about doing this? I think

education is a big key. Anyone getting ready to buy a puppy needs to know the basics, especially about puppy mills and how to avoid them.

Yes, it is easy to say, just don't buy a purebred or rescue a dog or puppy instead. But, that is not fair or reasonable in my opinion. Not everyone wants a mixed breed dog or a rescue and there are lots of legitimate reasons for this.

In my own case, I have owned purebreds, mixed breeds and many rescues. My current dog friend is my favorite breed, a golden retriever, and she was a rescue. Unfortunately, I had to rescue her as a puppy because of all the behavior and physical problems she has. Even as

a behavior therapist, trainer and expert that I am, living with my Annie has not been easy. In fact, it has been really difficult. It has cost me a small fortune to care for her physical issues and they are lifelong problems. I have also had to alter my lifestyle and the other animals that I live with considerably to accommodate her. Honestly, I do not want to do this again.

When my Annie is gone, I just want to enjoy my next dog. I want to buy a well bred, solid temperament and physically healthy puppy, a golden retriever, of course. I do not think that there is anything wrong with that.

Getting back to the basics then, anyone getting ready to buy a puppy needs to know that responsible, reputable breeders never sell their puppies via pet stores, period. Rarely is it possible to find puppies at a pet store that did not come from a puppy mill. This would be a store that normally does not sell puppies but is helping out someone in the neighborhood that had an "accidental" litter. Cases like these are easy to verify.

So, please do not buy puppies from pet stores unless they come from a local

rescue. If you think you are saving the puppy, think again. When you buy that pup, you make room for another and the cycle continues. If you cannot help yourself, do not go into these stores. In fact, do what I do and refuse to shop at a store that sells puppies.

I suggest that you be very careful when shopping for a pup via the Internet or newspaper ads. Buying a dog from a responsible breeder is like adopting a kid. You must qualify to buy one of their dogs. They will not sell their pups to just anyone who has the money, so beware.

It is extremely important to see where the pups have been living and to meet the parents, at least the mother. Do not meet a breeder somewhere other than their home to pick up your pup, even if it saves you lots of travel. It is so important to see the environment the pup came from. This can be tricky though because these greedy breeders are very clever.

In our local case, these people had a beautiful country estate. Their breeding operations were someplace else. It was very deceiving.

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Martha Norwalk

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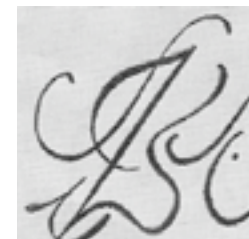
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