

# PETS & PEOPLE

## Tips For Finding A Healthy Puppy

(NAPSA)—If you're in the market for a new dog, it's important to find a good breeder.

That's the advice from experts who say that puppy mills—which are mass dog-breeding facilities that sell puppies through pet stores and over the Internet—often treat their animals cruelly and inhumanely.

According to The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), puppy mills frequently house dogs in shockingly poor conditions, particularly for the “breeding stock” animals who are caged and continually bred for years without human companionship and then killed, abandoned or sold to another puppy mill after their fertility wanes.

An estimated 10,000 of the mills operate in the U.S., forming a billion-dollar industry. The mills sell dogs through many pet stores, over the Internet and sometimes through local newspaper ads. Opponents of the mills say the best way to put them out of business is to not buy the puppies they sell.

Instead, they suggest visiting animal shelters, purebred rescue groups or a responsible breeder. Nationwide, one out of every four dogs in an animal shelter is a purebred, and an estimated 6 to 8 million animals enter shelters annually, with only about half of them being adopted.

The HSUS offers this additional information for prospective pet buyers:

- Be wary of claims that a pet store only sells animals from breeders who are “USDA inspected.” The USDA doesn't require all commercial breeders to be licensed, and the group establishes only minimum-care standards, even at



**Experts say it's important to avoid puppy mills when buying a dog.**

inspected puppy mills.

- Some disreputable breeders sell their dogs directly to the public over the Internet and through newspaper ads. These breeders are not required to be inspected by any federal agency and, in many states, are not inspected at all.

- Reputable breeders care where their puppies go and interview hopeful buyers. They don't sell through pet stores or to families they haven't thoroughly checked out.

- Purebred papers do not guarantee the quality of the breeder or the dog.

- Puppy mill puppies often have medical problems that can lead to veterinary bills in the thousands of dollars. In addition, poor breeding and socialization practices at many puppy mills can lead to behavioral problems throughout the puppies' lives.

For more information, including a good breeder checklist, visit [www.humanesociety.org/puppy](http://www.humanesociety.org/puppy).