

Katy pet store accused of sourcing puppies from 'Horrible Hundred' puppy mills



Claire Goodman, Staff writer

May 17, 2021 | Updated: May 17, 2021 4:29 p.m.

Katy Petland, a pet store that sells puppies, is under fire from the Humane Society of the United States for selling puppies from puppy mills rife with cruelty allegations.

The HSUS issues its “Horrible Hundred” report each year of puppy mills that operate under “gruesome conditions” and identifies the pet stores that bought puppies from those puppy mills. This year’s report, released May 10, accuses Petland stores of purchasing and then reselling the animals bred under inhumane conditions.

“The annual Horrible Hundred report provides a sampling of problem puppy mills and puppy brokers based on state and federal inspection records, complaints from the public and undercover investigation findings,” said Kristen Peek, media relations for HSUS. “This year’s report uncovers dogs suffering across the country in puppy mills, many of which are licensed and all of which are still in business despite years of animal care violations, including citations for injured and emaciated dogs, dogs and puppies exposed to extreme weather, and dogs found living in filthy and miserable conditions.”

The pandemic made conditions even worse for the animals, said John Goodwin, senior director of HSUS’s Stop Puppy Mills campaign. “While the USDA paused many of their in-person inspections during the pandemic, dogs were left more at risk than ever,” he said. “Public records and our undercover work show that Petland and other pet stores continue to buy from commercial breeding operations where dogs languish in miserable conditions.”

Elizabeth Kunzelman, media relations for Petland, refuted the HSUS’ claims that the corporation purchased puppies from puppy mills.

“Every year, the Washington D.C. fundraising giant, Humane Society of the United States -not to be confused with your local Humane Society or shelter- publishes this highly exaggerated report of allegations without ever having stepped foot in most of these kennels,” she countered. “In fact, in their own report, they acknowledge that they were not actually on site.”

Kunzelman said that when HSUS issued its report, Petland began conducting an internal study to make sure their puppies were sourced from humane breeders.

“In order to target Petland, HSUS sprinkles in some good breeders with misrepresented information to make them all appear negligent,” she said. “HSUS alleges eight of the 100 breeders listed are linked to Petland, and some of the suggested links are questionable and/or outdated at best. Additionally, much of the information provided goes back more than seven years with no violations since. The 70-page report is rife with misinformation and false statements about Petland.”

Kunzelman accused the HSUS of making claims against Petland despite not having visited all the breeders in question. “Unlike HSUS, at Petland we actually visit breeders and work with them on their continuous education programs,” she said. “At Petland, we care about where American families will obtain their next pet and we support responsible American breeders.”

Goodwin argued that the numbers spoke for themselves, adding that Petland is the only national chain retailer that still sells puppies from mass breeders.

“Dozens of pet stores across the country, including at least 21 Petland stores, purchased puppies from dealers in this year’s report,” he said. “This flies in the face of Petland’s claim that they only purchase from top quality breeders.”

Local animal advocacy groups rallied behind the HSUS’ findings, stating that the report is further proof of the proliferation of cruelty in puppy mills.

Houston PetSet, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to alleviating the homelessness and suffering of Houston’s companion animals, is currently backing legislation that would issue more stringent reporting practices for puppy retailers like Petland.

House Bill 1818 would require Petland to maintain thorough documents regarding the source of the puppies and submit to regular inspections by animal services.

“Animal homelessness is a crisis in our community and HB 1818 would alleviate some of the burdens that local rescues and shelters are currently shouldering,” said Tena Lundquist Faust, Co-President of Houston PetSet. “Not only would this bill prevent both humans and their pets from unnecessary suffering, it would also prevent the unnecessary euthanization of otherwise unwanted animals. In Texas, more than 100,000 animals are put down every year, and HB 1818 could help bring that number down significantly.”

claire.goodman@chron.com