

Dear Neighbors,

During any given year, over 6 million dogs and cats (more than the entire human population of Missouri) enter shelters and become homeless. Over 50% of them are euthanized due to overcrowding or health issues related to abuse and neglect. The sad animals you see in the t.v. commercials, which are so difficult to watch, are real. Those animals, and many more like them, really do exist. I know, because I spend much of my time as an animal rescue shelter volunteer and see the abused and abandoned animals first hand. All are scared, many are traumatized and must be taught to trust.

Purchasing from a pet shop or even from a “reputable” breeder takes homes away from shelter animals, and perpetuates the use of animals for profit. When a dog is purchased from a pet shop the transaction keeps an animal abuser in business, as most pet shops get their puppies from puppy mills. Puppy mills are businesses specifically created to breed puppies for sale. Unfortunately, the breeder animals spend their entire lives in small cages, often lying in their own waste. They never receive any affection. They are never allowed to walk outside their small cages (except to breed). They are never allowed to play, and most don’t even know how. They are only fed enough to allow them to continue breeding. They are matted, filthy, lonely, hungry, scared, depressed and usually sick. They have been emotionally and physically abused and neglected. Their living conditions are deplorable and when they can no longer breed, they are killed. If you were to see the condition of just one of these animals when it is rescued from a puppy mill, your life would never be the same. So if you plan on purchasing that happy little puppy from a pet shop, keep in mind that you will be leaving it’s parents behind to be abused, and then perpetuating their misery by putting more money and more motivation into the pocket of the abuser. The highest concentration of puppy mills is in Missouri and in Lancaster, Pennsylvania (Google “Amish animal abuse” or “Amish puppy mills”). Isn’t it time we stop using animals to fill our pockets with cash, or to satisfy our egos?

There is a rescue group for just about every breed (and species) of animal you can think of, and a good amount of animals in shelters are pedigreed. You need only to know the traits of the breed you are looking into to be sure it is a good fit with your family, and so will stay for a lifetime. The shelter staff can help with that.

This letter is intended only to help raise awareness. If you care about animals at all, here are some things you can do to help:

- Don't breed animals for fun or profit. Remember there is "*no need to breed*".
- Don't buy animals from pet shops or breeders (including on-line breeders).
- Do please adopt a shelter animal (www.petfinder.com is for rescue group animals only)
- Donate to a shelter or rescue group if you can (cash, blankets, towels, food, pet toys).
- Donate pet food to a local food bank. Many food bank patrons have pets that are in need too.
- Volunteer your time to a shelter or rescue group. The animals need love, affection and fun!
- Spay and neuter your pets so the population doesn't increase even more.
- Know that animal hoarding is not love. Take an animal only if you can give it a **proper** home.
- Remember that animals feel, even though they can't cry or express in words.
- Remember that animals are like toddlers. They need our help to survive, and they need love.
- Speak up, be a Voice and a defender for the animals. Share this letter. Teach empathy.

Thank you for caring.
When we know better, we do better!