

Responsible Sourcing of Companion Animals

Position:

The Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) supports the ethical and responsible sourcing of companion animals.

Definitions:

Backyard Breeder: An individual with little to no knowledge of acceptable breeding practices, who either intentionally or unintentionally breeds their own animal. Reasons for breeding may include profit, wanting their pets to experience producing a litter or believing their pet's offspring would be desirable companions.

Commercial Breeding Establishment: Breeders who have a large number of animals used for breeding and selling. Their facilities may be well-maintained, but the large quantity of animals in their care makes providing an acceptable standard of care impossible. Commercial breeding establishments sell directly to both individual buyers and pet stores.

Puppy Brokering: The practice of acquiring a puppy from a disreputable source and supplying these puppies to individuals, pet stores or others looking to buy or supply puppies.

Puppy Laundering: The practice of forming a non-profit, which fraudulently represents itself as a rescue to bypass legislation around puppy mills and obscure an animal's source, deceiving customers. Puppy launderers acquire animals from irresponsible sources, such as puppy mills, and transport animals to stores or sell directly to consumers, misrepresenting the animals as adoptable animals from an animal sheltering or rescue organization.

Puppy Mill: A large-scale, sub-standard commercial dog breeding operation, where profit is prioritized over the humane treatment of animals. Common features of puppy mills include poor environmental conditions, inadequate veterinary and animal care, sub-standard breeding practices leading to genetic defects and hereditary disorders, misleading or falsified documents and no discernment for where animals are sold.

Responsible Breeder: A breeder that is concerned about the welfare of each individual animal, uses appropriate breeding practices, ensures all offspring are cared for throughout their entire life, does not acquire animals from unethical or irresponsible sources and does not contribute to the homeless animal population.

Satellite Adoption Centre: A retail setting used to house and adopt homeless animals sourced from animal shelters and rescue organizations. Animals are provided with appropriate veterinary care, have their welfare needs met in the store and are spayed or neutered. Satellite adoption centres are also called an "adoption model."

Summary

- EHS encourages adopting animals through reputable humane societies, shelters and rescue organizations. If an animal is acquired through a private seller, individuals should make certain the welfare of both the animal's parents and offspring are adequately maintained, thus ensuring they are sourcing their animal from a responsible source and not a substandard breeding operation.
- Irresponsible and unethical companion animal sources do not prioritize the welfare of animals and often prioritize profit over welfare.
- Responsible sources are transparent in practices, adhere to high welfare standards and practice responsible and ethical breeding. Profit is not the primary motivation.
- Strategies supporting responsible sources of companion animals include public education and advocating for changes to legislation, policies and regulations pertaining to animal welfare.

Rationale

- EHS encourages individuals looking to acquire a companion animal to first consider adopting from a reputable humane society, SPCA, animal shelter or rescue organization.
- EHS is opposed to the breeding, transport, housing and sale of companion animals that causes distress, suffering or compromises an animal's welfare.
- EHS does not support irresponsible sourcing and/or breeding practices, such as:
 - backyard breeders;
 - puppy mills;
 - commercial breeding establishments;
 - puppy laundering;
 - puppy brokering; and
 - markets or pet stores that are not satellite adoption centres.
- EHS supports the adoption of animals through pet stores, which act as satellite adoption centres for reputable rescues and humane societies, thus discouraging large-scale commercial breeding, backyard breeding and puppy mill operations.
- EHS supports the purchase of animals from ethical and responsible breeders who will:
 - accept the return of their animals, thus not contributing to the population of homeless animal in shelters or to animal abandonment.
 - provide high quality care, taking the welfare of the animal into consideration and selecting breeding animals based on their physical and psychological health. Also, indications such as history of healthy parents, completing genetic testing, not favouring appearance over physical health or function and ensuring temperamentally unstable animals, who pose a risk to humans, other animals or themselves are not selected for breeding.

- The commercial breeding and sale of companion animals, where animals are bred primarily for profit, can be associated with poor welfare due to:
 - inadequate shelter, food, water, ventilation, grooming and/or veterinary care;
 - overcrowding;
 - inappropriate confinement;
 - abrupt or early weaning;
 - poor transport conditions;
 - a genetic predisposition to poor physical or psychological health; and
 - lack of socialization and enrichment.
- Companion animals from irresponsible sources are often removed from their mother and littermates prior to 8 weeks of age, which can result in reduced welfare and undesirable behaviours in adulthood; therefore, EHS discourages acquiring companion animals before 8 weeks of age.
- Dogs sold through pet stores with no adoption model or born in high volume commercial breeding establishments have an increased frequency of undesirable behaviours in adulthood, such as increased aggression towards people and other dogs, compared to dogs from responsible sources.
- Animals in commercial breeding establishments and imported animals from irresponsible sources may be subject to inhumane transport and can pose a risk for infectious disease.
- As public awareness of puppy mills increases, irresponsible and unethical sources are now taking deceptive measures to conceal their practices, such as puppy laundering. If individuals choose to acquire a companion animal from a source other than a reputable humane society, rescue organization, animal shelter or satellite adoption centre, EHS recommends ensuring they are from a responsible and welfare conscious source. Before searching for a companion animal, it is important to become familiar with the signs of an irresponsible source.
- Public education on the difference between responsible and irresponsible sourcing of companion animals should be supported in partnership between animal welfare organizations, veterinary associations and other key industry and government stakeholders.
- EHS supports the implementation of preventative government legislation, guidelines and oversight on the breeding, transport, housing and sale of companion animals. EHS encourages all levels of government to consider strategies that support responsible sourcing of companion animals in their community.

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