

By Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis

Combining veterinary care with this gentle therapy can help heal these dogs, both physically and emotionally.



ACUPRESSURE-MASSAGE FOR PUPPY MILL SURVIVORS

Pet shop puppies are adorable. Your heart melts and you have to go inside to see them. The sales clerk assures you the pups are pedigreed and from a reputable breeder. You want to believe her, but you've heard that pet shop puppies often have health and behavioral issues.

Sadly, puppies from pet stores are most likely the product of puppy mills, also referred to as commercial breeders. There are over 14,000 of these facilities in North America, and this doesn't even count "backyard breeders".

Unfortunately, the profit motives of these commercial operators lead to miserable conditions for breeding dogs and severe health and socialization problems for the puppies. Breeding females are kept in small, filthy cages. The dams are malnourished, receive little or no veterinary care, and are bred continuously. When their reproductive years are over, they are killed. It's a life of pure misery.

The puppies are taken from the dams at five or six weeks of age and shipped to pet stores. The International Humane Society estimates that over 50% of the puppies die before reaching a store. Unsuspecting buyers assume they are getting a "quality" dog, but the truth is, they're paying a premium price for a puppy that will probably have or develop congenital or hereditary conditions. Other common health issues these animals experience include musculoskeletal disorders, blood problems, respiratory conditions, kidney disease, epilepsy, and a host of other illnesses and infirmities.

Governmental agricultural departments are supposed to be the watchdogs of commercial breeding facilities, but they have lax standards and not enough people to monitor the huge number of puppy mills. However, many non-profit animal welfare organizations are trying their best to close down puppy mills and commercial breeders, even though their resources are limited.

