The Puppy Mill Pipeline

How Commercial Dog Breeding Operates Across the Midwest

Overview

The “puppy mill pipeline” refers to the large network of commercial dog breeding facilities that supply puppies to pet stores and online sellers across the United States. These operations thrive because of high consumer demand, limited transparency, and the rapid growth of online puppy sales. Thousands of puppies are bred each year in large-scale facilities, especially in **Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Missouri and Illinois**, which have some of the highest numbers of state-licensed and USDA-licensed breeders in the country.

What the Data Shows

Where Commercial Breeders Are Located

State and federal data reveal that many commercial breeding facilities are concentrated in rural, agricultural counties. The data shows many areas often include Amish and Plain community populations, where dog breeding has become a farming business.

State-specific data pages provide detailed lists of licensed kennels.

How the Pipeline Works

- Large-scale breeders produce litters of puppies for sale.
- Puppies are marketed online (and to pet stores) or through third-party “puppy broker” websites that often use phrases like “family raised” or “hand raised.”
- Most buyers never see the facility where the puppy was born.
- Puppies are delivered through air transport, hired “nannies,” trucks, or halfway meet-ups, which hides their true origin.
- Parent dogs usually remain at the breeding facility, often confined to small cages for their entire breeding lives.

What Are Commercial Dog Breeders?

Commercial dog breeders are legal businesses that focus on producing puppies for sale online or to pet stores. While licensed, these high volume facilities often prioritize quantity and profit over animal welfare.

Concerns About Commercially Bred Puppies

- **Overbreeding and genetic health problems**
- **Higher risk of disease**
- **Poor socialization and behavioral issues**
- **Early separation** from mothers and littermates, sometimes before 8 weeks
- **Transportation at young ages**, leading to fear and anxiety
- **Support for an industry with documented welfare problems**

How Online Puppy Sales Keep the Pipeline Running

Online puppy broker websites have become a major driver of the puppy mill industry. These platforms:

- Act as middlemen between breeders and buyers
- Often hide breeder names, locations, and license information
- Make it easy to buy a puppy with just a few clicks
- Present puppies as coming from “loving homes,” even when they come from high-volume commercial dog breeding kennels
- Prevent buyers from seeing the actual breeding conditions

As more states restrict pet store sales, online puppy sales continue to grow, keeping the pipeline profitable and largely hidden from the public.

Take Action

- Explore maps and data to understand where commercial breeders operate
- Never buy a puppy without meeting it and the mother dog in person first
- Adopt from a local shelter or rescue
- Share what you learn to help others make informed choices
- Visit StopOnlinePuppyMills.org