



Paws for Hope Animal Foundation submits that the City of Nanaimo should ban the sale of cats, dogs and rabbits in retail stores as soon as practicable. Below, we outline the most important factors related to the selling of pets in retail stores:

1. **Animal Welfare:** multiple studies have shown pets sold in pet stores frequently suffer behavioural and health problems; animals are sourced from inhumane breeding mills
2. **Cost to Taxpayers:** impulse purchases of pets leads to higher numbers of pets with behavioural and health problems being surrendered to shelters and abandoned to fend for themselves—thus becoming a burden on the municipal tax base
3. **Consumer Protection:** multiple studies have shown that pets sold in pet stores suffer from health and behavioural problems that are not disclosed to potential purchasers
4. **Social Cost:** there is no place for the needless suffering of pets in an ethical, humane community
5. **Public Support:** our advocacy shows there currently exists an overwhelming support for the ban on retail sales of pets; these city/municipal bans are already in place in over 200 major cities across North America
6. **Need for Inter-Governmental Action:** the issues related to ending the animal suffering inherent in the commercial breeding and retail sale of pets in BC requires action at all levels of government

1. ANIMAL WELFARE

Animal Breeding Mills

An animal breeding mill is a commercial facility that operates solely for the purpose of financial profit. These operations have no concern for the welfare of the breeding animals nor their offspring which are the revenue source. The animals live in inhumane conditions—confined in small wire structures for their entire lives with no access to fresh air or enough space to exercise or move freely. They are forced to live and eat surrounded, and most often covered, in their own feces and urine and the feces and urine of the animals in cages above them. Their health issues do not receive attention, and it is not uncommon for them to suffer from highly contagious eye, ear and respiratory infections. Many of the animals are prone to hip dysplasia, epilepsy, and heart and liver conditions. In addition to health

problems, the offspring sold in stores often have behavioural issues due to poor socialization and their traumatic start in life.

The Journal of Veterinary Behavior, Vol 19, May-June 2017, states in the Introduction of their study entitled Behavioral and psychological the outcomes for dogs sold as puppies through pet stores and/or born in commercial breeding establishments,

“Studies published during the past 23 years have suggested that dogs sold through pet stores and/or born in high-volume, commercial breeding establishments (CBEs) show an increased number of problem behaviors as adults.”

The summary states even more alarmingly that,

“...dogs sold through pet stores and/or born in high-volume CBEs (Commercial Breeding Establishments) have an increased frequency of a variety of undesirable adulthood behaviors compared with dogs from other sources, particularly noncommercial breeders. The most common finding (86%) was an increase in aggression directed toward the dog's owners and family members, unfamiliar people (strangers), and other dogs.”

Undercover videos have shown breeding mill animals forced to live among their dead companions and animals with open wounds being forced to continue to breed. Animals living in mills are often killed once no longer ‘useful’ (able to breed). The ‘lucky’ ones are saved from death by rescue organizations, but others are abandoned in local parks or remote locations.

Animals sold in pet stores do not come from responsible breeders. It is widely understood that no responsible dog breeder in Canada would ever sell their puppies to a pet store. In fact, the Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) explicitly prohibits its members from selling to retail stores. According to the CKC Code of Practice (part III subsection g),

“[n]o breeder shall sell or donate dogs for the purpose of their being auctioned, raffled or to pet stores”.

So where do pet stores get their ‘product’? From commercial breeding mills and/or backyard breeders.

It is not uncommon for stores that sell puppies to get them from puppy mills across the U.S. through a massive puppy broker called the Hunte Corporation. Further, the Hunte Corporation is notorious for its inhumane confinement of animals before transport. It has been charged with numerous USDA violations.

Although puppy mills receive much attention, kitten and bunny mills also exist and are equally as cruel. In many pet stores, the kittens come from Quebec, a province with lax animal welfare laws and largely recognized as the ‘animal breeding mill capital of Canada’. There have been recent improvements to Quebec’s animal welfare laws; however, there is no evidence that the amendments have had an impact on breeding mills throughout the province.

British Columbia has its own puppy and kitten breeding mill problem. The BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA) has rescued countless animals from inhumane breeding mills in our province. As reported by News 1130, Feb. 9, 2016,

“The BC SPCA says it has seized 66 sick and neglected dogs and puppies in what it deems one of the largest puppy mill seizures ever in BC. ... 32 adult dogs, 34 puppies with serious medical, psychological issues were removed from Langley property.”

The concern around BC animal mills recently led than Agriculture Minister Norm Letnick to propose a number of amendments to the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*. The legislation, if passed, will provide a framework for the licensing and/or registration of commercial breeders of cats and dogs. The amendments are supported by the BC SPCA, animal welfare organizations, and the general public.

Backyard Breeding

Commerical mills are not the only site of bad breeding—it occurs in individual homes as well. Oftentimes, the conditions at ‘backyard breeding sites’ are as poor as animal mills, albeit on a smaller scale. The goal of backyard breeders is to make money from selling puppies, kittens, and/or rabbits. Many backyard breeders lack the knowledge to breed and raise a healthy and socialized litter. They do not have the expertise to support a potential buyer in making the proper decision, and they do not support the buyer if problems arise.

Pet Store Conditions

Oftentimes, the welfare conditions improve only marginally once the animals reach the store. In a retail environment, the animals almost never receive adequate care. They are usually isolated in individual cages. They do not receive sufficient exercise, attention, or socialization. The worst retailers do not even attend to the animals’ physical needs or health problems.

Pet Habitat (at Metrotown in Burnaby) was one of the worst offenders in this regard. The puppies and kittens were kept alone in glass boxes and often appeared dejected or depressed. Sometimes, they were visibly sick. The public repeatedly took photos, protested, and called the SPCA. Pet Habitat closed, but the owners/operators re-opened in Vancouver as Granville Pet and Garden. They now keep the puppies and kittens in a back room, away from the public eye. Hearing the howling of the puppies has been reported by individuals walking past the store. We have had the opportunity to observe only one of the puppies, but can advise that it was under-socialized and frightened. During our Vancouver campaign we spoke to a woman who purchased a cat from Granville Pet and Garden, the kitten was so sick it had to be euthanized within five days of being purchased. Thankfully, when

the new Vancouver bylaw banning the retail sale of pets comes into effect, Granville Pet and Garden will no longer be able to sell cats, dogs and rabbits.

2. COST TO TAXPAYERS

Pet stores support impulse purchases. When consumers buy pets without adequate forethought, they often come to regret the decision. They realize, too late, that it is a significant responsibility which they cannot meet. In turn, these same consumers surrender their animals, or worse, abandon them. These surrenders and abandonments place a heavy burden on city shelters, which are funded through municipal taxes.

In 2010, the City of Richmond banned the retail sale of puppies. Pet Habitat and two other retailers challenged the city's decision—unsuccessfully. In *Pet Habitat v. Richmond*, [2011] B.C.J. No. 842, the BC Supreme Court held that “*imposing an obstacle to purchasing a dog is a rational way to minimize the number of unwanted and abandoned dogs in the city*” (para. 75).

It is worth noting that within two years of the ban in Richmond, surrenders to their city shelter had gone down by 50%. The correlation between the pet store ban and the decrease was clear.

3. CONSUMER PROTECTION

In his article, ‘Where Not to Buy a Dog: The Pet Store Connection to the Business of Puppy Mills’ (Forbes Magazine February 2012), Allen St. John interviewed Andrew Nibley, director of the documentary, ‘Madonna of the Mills’. St. John concludes the worst place to buy a puppy is, in fact, a pet store.

After condemning the ethics of the pet industry, Nibley attacks the issue from a consumer perspective. He discusses the high cost of pet store puppies—compared to their low ‘production’ costs at the breeding mills. He also discusses the many health problems associated with puppy mill animals. He states there's a 100% chance the puppy will have health problems, and a 50% chance that those problems will be serious within the first year. Ultimately, he concludes,

“...you're buying a defective product at over-inflated prices, even if you don't care about what happens to that puppy's parents, it's a bad, bad deal for the consumer.”

In his letter to Vancouver Councillor Andrea Reimer dated May 10, 2017, Dr. Shawn Llewellyn, Paws for Hope Animal Foundation Board President and practicing partner at Scottsdale Veterinary Hospital, confirms that health issues are rampant in pet store animals. If they survive their initial illness, many suffer their entire life with physical and/or psychological issues. Dr. Llewellyn states:

“Whether it is because an animal bought at a pet store was an impulse purchase or because the animal came with health and/or behaviour problems, many new owners are not able to, or are not prepared to deal with the challenges, leading to many of these animals being surrendered to municipal shelters, or worse, abandoned.”

4. SOCIAL COST

The retail sale of pets has a tremendous social cost. There is a direct link between the retail sale of pets and the needless suffering of animals. It is not justified in an ethical or humane society.

Residents of BC have a strong concern for animal welfare. They want to ensure that their communities are ones in which animals are treated fairly and humanely. At the very least, municipal bylaws must not support outright cruelty to animals.

If our municipal laws are meant to be a reflection of our city’s values, then the antiquated bylaws permitting the retail sale of pets must be amended.

5. PUBLIC SUPPORT

We have experienced overwhelming public support over Paws for Hope’s past five years of advocating for the ban on retail sale of pets. Our most recent experience with the City of Vancouver confirms that the vast majority, (over 96%), of the community does not want to see cats, dogs and rabbits sold in pet stores. We did not anticipate that a ban on the retail sale of pets would be controversial. Rather, the public would applaud the decision and in their unanimous vote to implement the ban we requested, the Vancouver City Councillors, thoughtfully reviewed the facts and listened to their constituents, as all municipal councils are elected to do.

Over 200 major cities across North America, including LA, Chicago, San Francisco, and Toronto have already banned the retail sale of pets. There are 14 cities in Canada with bans. Three of those are in BC; Richmond (as discussed above), New Westminister and now Vancouver. After Richmond implemented its ban in 2010, the Richmond News ‘Best Of’ series reported it to be the “best political decision” of the year. Support for Vancouver’s ban has been overwhelmingly positive, with over 95% of people supporting the ban.

6. NEED FOR INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ACTION

Ending inhumane breeding practices does not have one, easy solution. It requires action and cooperation by all levels of government. Government has an important role to play in protecting

animals, but various levels of government sometimes abdicate their responsibility over the welfare of animals.

The federal and provincial governments have the power to pass laws improving general animal welfare. Specifically, they can legislate breeding regulations and restrictions. However, breeding regulations will not address the issues around importing animals for sale. Municipal governments can (and do) address this issue through their business bylaws.

Reduced to its simplest analysis, the pet industry is one of supply and demand. If consumers stopped buying from pet stores—and over the internet, the cruel puppy mill industry would cease to exist. All municipal governments can—and should—take a stand against breeding mills by refusing to allow the sale of these animals in retail stores.

Paws for Hope Animal Foundation urges City Council to move forward and ban the retail sale of cats, dogs and rabbits. We look forward to answering your questions and fully supporting you in this endeavour.

Yours truly,

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