

NSW Pet Shops and Puppy Farms: The Facts

The peak Australian industry body, The Pet Industry Association of Australia (PIAA), is passionate about ending puppy factories across Australia. According to the RSPCA, a puppy farm (also known as a puppy factory or puppy mill) is defined as;

'an intensive dog breeding facility that is operated under inadequate conditions that fail to meet the dogs' behavioral, social and/or physiological needs'.

PIAA along with pet industry leaders, are strong advocates for animal welfare and fully support national reforms and stronger regulations. You as a business within the Pet Industry can contribute positively to this discussion and form part of the solution.

RSPCA NSW, Animal Welfare League NSW (AWL) and The Australian Veterinarian Association (AVA) consider that well managed pet stores can be part of the solution. That is, pet stores can assist with adoptions in an effort to assist in reducing the overall euthanasia of animals coming from shelters, pounds and rescue groups. RSPCA NSW, Animal Welfare League NSW and The Australian Veterinarian Association believe that a total ban on puppies and kittens in responsible pet shops will terminate the only transparent part of the industry and drive the sale into an unregulated market, making it much harder to enforce regulations and ensure the welfare of animals.

As well as providing a regulated option for members of the public who wish to purchase a puppy or kitten, an increasing number of pet stores are also partnering with animal welfare organization to help re home rescue dogs and cats.

The Facts about Pet Shops

01. According to the Australian Companion Animal Council (ACAC) survey, pet shops equate for only 16% of puppies sold in Australia. We believe it is now less than 10% because online sales are becoming far more popular in the past couple of years. Current data regarding the number of puppies sold online is unclear but the fact that pet shops only equate to 10%, it is obvious the majority of sales of puppies and kittens are online, via breeders or to a lesser extent than breeders re-homed shelter animals.

02. Pet shops do not greatly contribute to shelters. The breeds most commonly found in shelters are breeds such as staffy x, kelpie x, bull arab x, and other similar breeds. These breeds are not available from most pet shops.

03. Pet shops are a 7 day a week business that are transparent and answerable to the public. You don't need to make an appointment to see a pet shops facilities, any member of the public, or an animal authority such as RSPCA/ AWL can just call in un-announced.

04. Pet shops just work under strict regulation under POCTA and the Animal Welfare Code of Practice relevant to their state.

05. Currently, pet shops must keep records of where their pets come from and where they go and can provide details to authorities at any time.

06. Pet shops in NSW and most other states, must by law micro-chip 100% of puppies sold so the origin can be traced for the life of the dog.

Additional Responsibilities for PIAA members

07. PIAA is currently implementing the Dogs Lifetime and Traceability Policy by partnering with participating welfare agencies throughout Australia. This policy means that should a dog sold from a PIAA store be surrendered or end up at a shelter, it will be re-homed at the expense of PIAA. Since the implementation of the program in 2013, only 3 dogs have required rehoming in NSW and QLD where the policy has already been implemented.

08. PIAA stores acquire dogs from breeders who have passed a PIAA Audit. In many cases these breeders are annually inspected by a veterinarian and some PIAA stores voluntarily provide RSPCA with breeder details. At any time, RSPCA or AWL can ask any pet shop for details of where their puppies and kittens come from.

09. PIAA stores have to abide by a higher standard re: our National Code of Practice. It is our hope that our NCOP will become the national standard for all pet shops.

The best welfare outcomes for animals based on fact, not emotion

10. Some groups are well intended but have little evidence to support their claims that all pet shops only deal with puppy farms. Our concern is that this may lead to irrational policy change such as the banning of puppies and kittens in pet stores based on pure emotion not fact.

11. In many cases footage and claims made regarding the breeding and sale of puppies and kittens is neither dated or supported by scientific or university studies.

12. RSPCA NSW and AWL support a national self-funded licensing system for pet shops and breeders and believe that pet shops should be allowed to continue to sell puppies and kittens under a system that is funded by the industry via a licensing fee and audited by an independent body.

Our solution

13. To ensure adequate resources are available, we advocate a self-funding licensing system for all breeders and pet shops. The fee charged will cover the cost of independent inspectors to visit breeders and pet shops to enforce compliance. This will ensure that animal welfare is the focus when either breeding or selling puppies and kittens.

14. The AVA supports robust breeder licensing regimes and codes of practice for pet shops that are well enforced.

What can you do

- ▶ The best welfare outcomes for pets makes great business sense
- ▶ Advocate PIAA standards and practices within your business
- ▶ Communicate the Re-homing and Traceability Policy to your customers
- ▶ Encourage your staff to understand them
- ▶ Be answerable to the Code of Practice
- ▶ Communicate with PIAA
- ▶ Speak to your local member
- ▶ Make submission into the NSW Parliamentary Enquiry www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees

References

- ▶ ACAC study https://petsinaustralia.com.au/wp-content/themes/_TBST-BusinessAccelerator-v3/library/Downloads/Pet-Ownership-in-Australia-2013.pdf
- ▶ AVA Survey 'Sale of Pets through Pets Shops' 2007
- ▶ PIAA Rehoming and Tractability Policy



PET INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

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