1. The campaign

Pup Aid was set up to help tackle puppy farming – the mass commercial production of puppies purely for profit and without any thought for the health, welfare and quality of life of the puppy and its parents.

Kept in horrific conditions, puppies are separated early from the mother, usually unvaccinated, sent long distances cross country and sold en masse – often poorly and riddled with painful disease – to pet shops, private dealers, and for both sale and re-sale through various websites.

The vast majority of these puppies are supplied from puppy farms in Wales and Ireland, outside the jurisdiction of the UK Parliament. We can however tackle the demand side by looking at the retail points – where these animals are sold.

Specifically, we wanted the public and the government to ask “Where’s Mum?” – to insist on seeing the puppy or kitten and mother interacting, and to be aware that the absence of the mother was likely to indicate that the puppy had been bred commercially and was being sold on by a third party.

As the campaign has developed we have made it our explicit focus to tackle the sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops and other relevant retail outlets (e.g. garden centres, puppy supermarkets), given that the mother is never present and that these puppies have come from puppy farms.

It is our belief, one shared by the majority of animal charities, welfare organisations, and veterinary professionals – including Blue Cross, Dogs Trust and The Kennel Club, that there is no justification for the sale of puppies and kittens in these types of retail outlets.

By tackling the sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops, we can:

- **Remove the most impulsive way of buying a puppy** – instead providing the opportunity to encourage prospective owners to research the most appropriate dog and breed for them, to consider rescue pet adoption, and follow DEFRA’s own advice to always ask to see puppy or kitten interacting with its mother.

- **Protect prospective owners from potential human and animal health problems associated with pet shop puppies** – a study in the Journal of Small Animal Practice found that puppies from pet shops were likely to carry dangerous zoonotic gastrointestinal pathogens, e.g. *E. Coli*, *Campylobacter*, etc., as well as deadly Parvovirus, *Giardia* responsible for high puppy mortality rates.

- **Protect prospective owners from the behavioural problems associated with pet shop bought puppies** – a US study found that puppies obtained from pet shops were three times more likely to display aggression directed at their owner, and almost twice as likely to show aggression to other dogs they did not know, compared to dogs
obtained from a small responsible breeder that have undergone appropriate and
effective socialisation.

- **Take a step in the right direction in curbing irresponsible breeding practices** –
  the vast majority of industry experts and professionals agree no responsible breeder
  would ever sell to a third party without meeting prospective owners to assess their
  suitability regarding breed choice, lifestyle, etc.

- **Address part of the system encouraging overproduction of pets** – it's far too
easy to buy pets while our rescue shelters overflow, while thousands of healthy pets
in rescue centres await homes every single day.

### 2. The debate

We are working to secure a 90 minute debate in the House of Commons chamber in June,
and hope to be able to count on the support of the following:

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<td>Gordon Birtwistle MP</td>
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<td>Stuart Andrew MP</td>
<td>Tom Brake MP</td>
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<td>Angie Bray MP</td>
<td>Sir Nick Harvey MP</td>
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During the debate we need as many MPs as possible to show their support for a ban on the
sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops, garden centres, and puppy supermarkets.

This briefing pack is intended to support MPs in the drafting of speeches or interventions. It
has been written with reference to materials produced by Dogs Trust and its campaign
against the “battery farming of dogs”, The Kennel Club, the Care and Respect Includes All
Dogs Campaign (C.A.R.I.A.D), the Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding,
and the research of campaigners.
If, however, you have a specific question not answered in the briefing please do get in touch and we will endeavour to find the information you need.

3. The briefing

• Background information on puppy farming
• Sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops
• What national and local government can do

3.1. Background information on puppy farming

3.1.1. What is a puppy farm?

A puppy farm is a large scale breeding operation – what the Dogs Trust terms “battery farming of dogs”.

Puppy farms are most often run in rural areas associated with farm operations. Outbuildings, such as barns, are converted to kennels. However, there are many which operate from domestic premises with rooms used to house dogs, often confined to crates.

Typically abuses arise because of the economic driver: dog farmers regard the dogs as tradeable commodities. The profit motive can lead to cutting corners, resulting in gross and intentional abuses. Often the puppy farming environment is characterised by:

• Failure to provide veterinary care
• Failure to carry out preventative treatments, such as vaccination, protection from worms, fleas.
• Keeping of breeding parents in barren, kennel accommodation
• Failure to provide even minimal levels of exercise or stimulation for dogs
• Failure to provide socialisation activities for puppies
• Breeding of dogs with heritable health and/or conformation problems
• Inbreeding as a financially rewarding convenience
• Repeated breeding of bitches to exhaustion
• Disposal of unwanted breeding animals
• Negligence with regard to selection of, or checks on the suitability of, purchasers

3.1.2. Are the puppies healthy?

These puppies often have genetic or other health problems relating to poor breeding conditions. Puppy farmers most often lack commitment to avoiding health problems associated with in-breeding, failing to undertake suggested genetic tests or inappropriate crossing. They are major contributors to the current epidemic of genetically-driven health problems.
3.1.3. What about behavioural issues?

Negative consequences of puppy farm conditions of breeding are likely to extend to the behaviour and health of puppies reared in them.

The ‘socialisation period’, when puppies leave their whelping box up to around 12-14 weeks, is viewed as particularly important for the formation of social relationships which are likely to have long-term impacts on their adult behaviour. Veterinary surgeons, canine behaviourists, and welfare organisations all recommend exposure, over this period, to a wide range of stimuli with extensive social contact. In the puppy farm and retail environment, this will seldom occur.

Puppies deprived of appropriate experience during sensitive periods show less friendliness and responsiveness to people, often higher levels of fear-based aggression, and generally lower trainability. In addition, puppies separated from their dams during this period show poorer health. Unfortunately, this is likely to lead to greater risk of being relinquished by owners, and to contribute to dog abandonment and the stray dog problem.

3.1.4. What happens to the mothers?

Dog rescue organisations regularly take in dogs previously kept in a ‘puppy farm’ environment, most commonly ex-breeding bitches. Commonly, such dogs exhibit a wide range of signs of neglect. These include untreated ear infections, tooth and gum infections, skin complaints, eye infections, and more severe problems such as untreated tumours.

Usually ex-puppy farm dogs also exhibit a wide range of behavioural problems. These often include initial high levels of fearfulness and withdrawal. Such dogs may be unfamiliar with going outside, standing on grass, or other such basic experiences. Adopters frequently report that rehabilitation takes a great length of time (sometimes years) and that these dogs may continue to show fear reactions for the rest of their lives.

The observations of rescue organisations gain strong support from a recent study, in which a comparison was made between adult dogs brought up in a domestic environment with dogs of equivalent breed, age, and other characteristics previously kept as breeding animals in puppy farm situations. Dogs previously kept in a puppy farm situation were found to be 42% more likely to experience physical health problems. They were significantly more likely to show fear in a range of situations. Such dogs were also more passive showing low levels of excitability and energy.

3.1.5. Are puppy farms legal?

Puppy farms operate both illegally, in the sense that no local authority license is held, and ‘legally’, where the conditions correspond to most or all of those described above, yet a license has been awarded by the authority. The prevalence of such operations, particularly concentrated in some areas, is high. In Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, where most breeding operations occur in Wales, there were 159 licensed premises in late 2011. While not all of these would be described as puppy farms, many are characterized by such conditions. For example, in Carmarthenshire a dog breeding operation with 196 breeding
dogs has been continuously licensed for many years, yet a recent planning application states that there are only 1.5 full-time equivalent staff to look after these dogs.

It has been evident in Wales that ‘behind the scenes’ there are likely to be a large number of unlicensed premises. Again in Carmarthenshire, an unlicensed breeding operation with 123 breeding dogs came to light early in 2012.

3.1.6. How many puppy farms are there?

The Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding’s report on Dog Breeding, published in 2010, found a concentration of dog farming in Wales and as at 31 March 2009, 977 dog breeding establishments were known to the authorities. Of these 533 were exempt from licensing because they were too small (breeding less than five litters a year), 195 were licensed, and 249 were unlicensed and undergoing investigation.

Dog’s Trust case study

In August 2009 Clare Marklen decided to get another dog to join her two Jack Russell Terriers (JRTs). She saw an advert online for a litter of miniature JRTs and went to the seller’s house to buy one. There was only one puppy left, a tiny black female JRT crossed with a Chihuahua. Clare immediately felt suspicious as the pup didn’t resemble the ones in the advert, she was not allowed to see the dog’s parents and the sellers did not provide her with a puppy pack about how to look after the dog, but she felt sorry for her so paid £295 and took her home.

Clare explains:

“I should have listened to the alarm bells ringing in my head, but my husband and I just wanted to get her out of there so paid the money. Pebbles was subdued and began to pass blood and have diarrhoea almost immediately. The vet said she could have a number of problems, gave her some medication and an injection and told us to keep her separated from my other two dogs so the infections didn’t spread. The next morning I went downstairs to check up on her and she was dead in her basket.

We’d only had her 2 days and I was heartbroken. I repeatedly called the breeder to warn them about the infection in case the other puppies had it, but they just wouldn’t answer the phone. I didn’t want a refund, I was concerned about the other dogs’ welfare.”

Clare now has a five month old Parson Terrier puppy, but it took her a further four attempts to find a reputable breeder willing to show her both parents and provide her with a puppy pack.

3.2. Pet shops selling puppies and kittens

3.2.1. How many pet shops still sell puppies and kittens?

According to the Pet Care Trust’s 2008 State of the Sector survey, just 2% of pet shops – approximately 70 across the UK – still choose to sell young puppies and kittens. It is
believed that in every instance the puppies and kittens are housed and sold without their mothers.

Whilst the number of pet shops selling puppies and kittens in the UK is relatively small there are no signs of a downward trend, or that these outlets will naturally disappear without intervention from either national or local policy makers:

- 2008: A Pet Care Trust survey estimated that around 2% of UK pet stores sold puppies and kittens, equating to around 70 stores UK wide.
- 2014: A more extensive survey for the Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association, based on Freedom of Information requests, found that across 311 UK councils there were 92 pet shops licensed to sell dogs, and 169 to sell kittens. A very small percentage of these were private dwellings.
- April 2014: We followed this research with a further survey of councils in England. From the results we estimate the number remains static – with between 50 and 70 pet shops across England still selling puppies and kittens (survey responses from 102 local authorities revealed that 15.5% had at least one pet shop licensed to sell puppies and kittens).

3.2.2. What conditions are the puppies kept in?

The pet shop environment, while subject to inspection, is very poor at meeting the need for puppies to develop and exhibit important normal behaviour patterns and the need to be housed with other animals. Clear patterns have been established between early experiences and the development of aggression in dogs.

The 1951 Pet Animals Act simply requires that:

- the animals will at all times be kept in accommodation suitable as respects size, temperature, lighting, ventilation and cleanliness
- the animals will be adequately supplied with suitable food and drink and (so far as necessary) visited at suitable intervals
- the animals, being mammals, will not be sold at too early an age
- all reasonable precautions will be taken to prevent the spread among animals of infectious diseases;
- appropriate steps are taken in case of fire or other emergency

Consequently, puppies are normally housed in tiled cubicles with front access, which provides an easily cleaned but barren environment. Some shops will provide a selection of puppy toys but others just provide a bed. Play is necessary for development and the lack of stimulation is a major concern if puppies remain in the shop for more than a few days. Staff will only be present on site during opening hours. Potentially this can mean that puppies are routinely left unattended overnight for 12 or more hours.

A particular concern is the new trend for puppy ‘supermarkets’. These are large establishments that exclusively sell puppies and offer a large range of breeds for sale. Some will have more than fifty puppies on the premises at any one time. This clearly poses a high risk in terms of disease transmission as litters from different sources are housed within the
same area. The intention will be to sell puppies as quickly as possible in order to minimise costs and maximise turnover. Puppies also have a very short 'shelf life' so there will be considerable pressure to sell them before they lose their appeal.

In 1951, when this issue was last looked at, it may have been considered acceptable to narrowly define an animal’s well-being with reference solely to its accommodation, access to suitable food and drink, and ‘visits’ at appropriate intervals. It is not acceptable today. Action is long overdue.

### 3.2.3. Where are these pet shops?

Unfortunately, the Government does not keep any data on the number of pet shops licensed to sell puppies and kittens as it is a matter for local authorities. Recent surveys and Freedom of Information requests have identified the scale of the problem (outlined earlier), but we only have an incomplete list of specific premises.

They include the following pet shops:

- Springtime Garden Centre, Crews Hill – Enfield Borough Council
- Belvedere Pets & Flowers, Kent – Bexley Borough Council
- Jumanji Pets – Camden Borough Council
- Nutshaw Kennels – Burnley Borough Council
- Aquapets – Chelmsford City Council
- Elm Park Pets – Havering Council
- S&A Pets – Havering Council
- Wentwood Quarry Edge Kennels – Newport City Council
- One Stop Pet Shop – Stoke on Trent City Council
- Roxy’s Pet Shop – Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- Petland – Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

### 3.2.4. Are these puppies healthy?

The pet shop environment often has a significantly adverse impact on the health, welfare and socialisation of the puppies concerned. In addition, as the vast majority, if not all, of the puppies are from puppy farms you are likely to see a number of common problems as with other puppy farmed dogs. The Dogs Trust identify these as:

- Parvovirus – can be fatal and cost up to £4,000 to treat
- Worms – can be fatal but if it causes bad diarrhoea requiring a drip it could cost £1000 or even intussusception, requiring surgery at a cost of £5,500
- Hip dysplasia – two total hip replacements would cost at least £7,000
- Patella luxation (dislocating knee-caps) – surgery on both knees would cost at least £1,500 for each knee
- Congenital heart problems – if surgery required would cost £5,000-6,000 and/or lifelong medical management costing thousands
3.2.5. What about behavioural problems?

The ‘pet shop’ environment, while subject to inspection and potentially good in terms of physical environment, is very poor at meeting the need for puppies to develop and exhibit important normal behaviour patterns and the need to be housed with other animals. Clear patterns have been established between early experiences and the development of fear aggression in dogs.

A US study found that puppies obtained from pet shops were three times more likely to display aggression directed at their owner, and almost twice as likely to show aggression to other dogs they did not know, compared to dogs obtained from a small responsible breeder.

3.2.6. Wouldn’t a ban have a negative impact on these businesses?

We believe that for the majority of pet shops affected, the sale of puppies and kittens constitutes a relatively small percentage of turnover. Although animal welfare issues demand immediate action, a six month delay in the legislation coming into force would allow those businesses to find alternative revenue streams, such as grooming and doggy daycare – activities with the potential to generate repeat business and establish long-term customer relationships.

3.3. What can the Government do?

If the Government is consistent in its own position that owners should always ask to see the puppy with the mother, then there can be no justification for permitting the sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops where in all documented cases the mother is not present.

The Government is already empowered to bring forward secondary legislation under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Chapter 13 on licensing of activities involving animals was explicitly designed with the future amendment of the Pet Animals Act 1951 in mind.

Secondary legislation would repeal any outdated legislation, and could be introduced to prohibit the licensing of these pet shop premises or retail outlets to sell puppies or kittens. Crucially, this legislation could be introduced and passed by Statutory Instrument in an SI Committee and not on the floor of the House, so will not impact the legislative timetable.

The Government could also go on the record to confirm that local authorities are empowered to and could explicitly forbid the sale of puppies and kittens. The Pet Animals Act 1951 states that a local authority shall have ‘discretion to withhold a licence on other grounds’ and David Heath, former Minister of State for Agriculture and Food, stated in a written answer that “conditions can be placed on individual pet shop licenses restricting the animals that can be sold”.

1 House of Commons - Commons Written Answers - Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 04.09.13
Consequently, in addition to calling for legislation and if the government insists legislation is not needed, we ask MPs to call on the Minister to make a statement, during the debate in June, noting that DEFRA:

- Cannot support the sale of puppies and kittens in circumstances where it is not possible to see the mother and the rest of her litter;
- Is cognisant of the particularly serious – and often life-threatening – animal welfare and public health (including financial) problems associated with pet shops and retail outlets;
- Confirms that local authorities are already empowered to amend licensing conditions or to ban outright the sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops should they chose to do so; and
- Encourages local authorities to tackle this issue using existing powers.

Such a statement would allow animal charities and welfare organisations to put their weight behind a public awareness campaign, aimed at better educating owners.

In this way the Government can:

- Adopt a position consistent with its own guidance to owners: “If you are buying a puppy or kitten, you should ask to see it with its mother and the rest of the litter”.
- Help to improve UK animal welfare without recourse to legislation.
- Show that it has listened to the 110,000 petitioners and is sensitive to the public’s strong desire for this issue to be tackled.
- Support local authorities: our survey found that the vast majority of local authorities oppose the sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops, but less than 50% knew they were empowered to act.
- Provide the animal charities and welfare organisations with a ‘hook’ for a campaign to raise awareness and change owners/public behaviours, driving further change.

3.4. What can local government do?

Under the Pet Animals Act 1951, local authorities are already empowered to ban the sale of puppies (and kittens) in pet shops. Indeed, David Heath CBE MP, former Minister of State for Agriculture and Food, confirmed in a written answer last September that “conditions can be placed on individual pet shop licenses restricting the animals that can be sold”.

However, our research indicates that less than half (45%) of local authorities are aware they have the power to amend licensing conditions. A further 29% are unaware of the legal situation. This alarming finding makes clear that, at the very least, strong clarificatory guidance from the minister is necessary to secure the welfare of puppies and kittens.

We would urge local authorities to publicly declare their opposition to the sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops, and to set out their position in writing. Derby City Council, Bristol City Council and Swindon Borough Council have led the way in doing exactly that, while we are
awaiting responses from a number of local authorities including Kent County Council and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

We consider Swindon Borough Council to be a best practice example of an animal welfare policy which prohibits the sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops. Its sixteen requirements are specifically designed to block this practice; indeed, it explicitly states that “it is the default condition in the Borough that dogs are not to be sold on a pet shop licence.”

The requirements include:

- No dog shall be sourced from a breeder whose dogs are kept at a location more than 45 miles distance from the licence-holding pet shop;
- No puppy shall pass into the keeping of the holder of the pet shop licence unless it has remained with the dam and at the place of birth for a minimum period of 8 weeks.

In the absence of government action, the CARAID (Care and Respect Includes All Dogs) campaign argues that “were these conditions adopted by every council in the UK we would virtually see an end to commercial breeding (puppy farming)”.

Encouraging your local authority to follow suit would represent a significant step towards the eradication of pet shop sales in the UK.

4. Endorsements

Pup Aid is grateful to have received the support of Blue Cross, Dogs Trust, The Kennel Club, PETA, The Mayhew Animal Home and Wood Green Animal Shelter for its campaign to ban the sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops.

Separately, a number of animal welfare organisations have gone on the record to express their support for a ban on the sale of puppies in pet shops, including:

- **Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding** – “the Council is strongly of the view that a pet shop does not provide an appropriate environment for the homing, even on a temporary basis of puppies” vii.
- **APGAW** – “it is wrong to buy a puppy from a source that gives no opportunity to see the parents” viii.
- **RSPCA** – “the RSPCA is opposed to the sale of animals in pet shops” ix.

Meanwhile, respondents to our survey of local authorities were asked to outline their personal position on the matter. As experts, and irrespective of their Council’s position, the vast majority of dog wardens who responded to our survey indicated strong opposition to the sale of puppies and kittens in a pet shop environment. Typical responses described the practice as “inappropriate”, or “unacceptable on welfare grounds”.

- “A pet shop is not the right environment for puppies and kittens to be sold and creates a situation for people to purchase on the spur of the moment without thought for the animal’s needs, and may later end up with the animal being rehomed, or worse, neglected.”
• “It is extremely unlikely that we would be satisfied that conditions would be suitable to ensure the welfare needs of the animal could be met in a pet shop.”

• “The puppies are normally sold at a time when they are going through a period of learning and socialisation, and prolonged stays in premises where they have insufficient opportunity for that due to staff needing to carry out other duties can impact heavily on future behaviour patterns.

• “Due to the amount of unwanted cats and dogs, there is no need for a pet shop to be selling these animals.

• “It would require exceptionally stringent conditions and enforcement to ensure welfare conditions are met.”

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i Enteropathogens in pups from pet shops and breeding facilities, Journal of Small Animal Practice, Vol 54, September 2013
ii McMillan, F., Serpell, J., Duffy, D., Masaoud, E., & Dohoo, I. (2013). Differences in behavioral characteristics between dogs obtained as puppies from pet stores and those obtained from non-commercial breeders Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 242 (10), 1359-1363 DOI: 10.2460/javma.242.10.1359
iii Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding
iv Under the Pet Animals Act 1951 premises of any nature, including a private dwelling, where the business of selling animals as pets is carried out, are considered a pet shop. The same definition is applied to this briefing.
vii Legislation Recommendations, 2013
viii Dog Breeding Report, 2012
ix Letter to Local Authorities