



28 April 2014

Milwaukee Common Council
Public Safety Committee
200 East Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Re: Consideration of a Pet Sales Ordinance

Dear Chairman Witkowski and Committee members,

On behalf of Best Friends Animal Society and our nearly 300,000 members, I am pleased to offer support for an ordinance to ban the retail sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in Milwaukee pet stores. We urge you to join the other fifty-two communities throughout North America that have made the change to no longer allow pet stores to sell commercially bred companion animals.

Pet mills, particularly puppy mills, are a serious problem in the U.S. These facilities, which supply nearly 100% of retail pet stores, are cruel and inhumane factories in which profit and maximum productivity take priority over the welfare of the animals.

Although these breeders may be regulated, their standards do not ensure a humane life for animals; in fact, they do little more than require food and water. USDA inspection reports show that many of these facilities continue to sell animals to Milwaukee pet stores even after being cited for serious violations of the Animal Welfare Act.

These types of kennels can legally have hundreds - often a thousand - animals in one facility, and these animals are allowed to be confined to very small cages for their entire lives, forced to breed continuously in order to produce as many puppies as possible.

Because the goal is to make a profit, mill owners must cut corners to keep expenses low and profits high. For the unsuspecting consumer, this frequently results in the purchase of a pet facing an array of communicable or congenital diseases, many of which don't surface until after any warranties are applicable. This creates a financial and emotional burden on the consumer, who believes he or she is buying a pet from the best source possible, and results in many of these animals being surrendered to our already overcrowded shelters.

It makes little sense to continue manufacturing dogs and cats while so many are being killed for lack of space. Public education has been effective, but until communities take the initiative to limit the supply of animals being imported from these mostly out-of-state commercial facilities, there can be no hope of preventing these unnecessary deaths.



**Best
Friends
Animal
Society**

SAVE THEM ALL™

Pet stores that obtain their animals from mills are not an asset to the community, yet it is those retailers who benefit most from the sale of these pets. While they may profit from the practice of buying puppies and kittens at a low price from commercial brokers and then selling them (typically without first spaying or neutering them) at a high price, it is the taxpaying public who pays for animal control to house and kill unwanted animals in the community.

Pet stores that currently sell commercially bred animals could be part of the solution rather than the problem, simply by either stopping pet sales altogether (and focusing on other profitable, ancillary components such as grooming, daycare or pet supplies), or by changing to a business model that offers products, services, and space for animal rescue organizations to adopt out animals from their stores.

Best Friends has partnered with several of the many pet stores that have transitioned from selling milled dogs and cats to offering rescued pets for adoption, and we have found this progressive model to be both viable and embraced by the communities in which the stores are located. Thus, a ban on the retail sale of pets would *not* preclude pet stores from staying in business, and could in fact alleviate a significant burden on the city by increasing pet adoptions.

The intent of the pet sales ordinances that have been enacted thus far is to focus on the most inhumane and irresponsible of the breeders who supply the pet trade: the high volume commercial mills. Not only are responsible hobby breeders not negatively impacted by these ordinances, the ordinances actually help them by eliminating the wholesale market for poorly bred animals, giving them increased opportunity to provide a better quality of “product” for people looking to purchase pets.

Best Friends has been honored to work with many of the cities to enact these ordinances, including Los Angeles, Chicago and San Diego. We are proud to support you in your efforts to make Milwaukee a humane and progressive leader for the rest of the country to follow, and we encourage the Council to take a compassionate, common sense initiative to addressing the pet mill crisis in your community.

Thank you for your consideration of this important proposal.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Oreck

Elizabeth Oreck
National Manager, Puppy Mill Initiatives
Best Friends Animal Society
puppymills.bestfriends.org
elizabetho@bestfriends.org