

**Submission
No 106**

COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Hunter Animal Watch Inc.
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7th June, 2015

Hunter Animal Watch Inc. submits the following to the **Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in NSW.**

Dear Committee Members,

Hunter Animal Watch Inc

Hunter Animal Watch Inc. was established in 1998, to operate a pet desex programme to subsidise the cost of pet desexing for pensioners in the Lower Hunter. The objective was to reduce the number of healthy animals killed in local pounds and shelters. We have assisted over 28,000 owners since we began, but the numbers killed do not decrease. It is regrettable that the provisions of the Companion Animal Act have not resulted in a higher level of responsible pet ownership. To achieve real progress there is an urgent need for intervention from the State Government.

Our help is requested frequently by pensioners owning very expensive dogs. For example, we are told "this dog cost me \$1,500", but as they are pensioners, we feel bound to assist them. We wonder where these dogs come from, and we suspect they come from puppy factories. We are also contacted by owners who tell us that their female dog has produced numerous litters, and the owners do not want any more. "What happens to the puppies?" we ask. "We sell them". When we ask "Are you a breeder?", they answer in the affirmative, and they are informed that we do not assist breeders.

We also find that often owners no longer want the dog - it is too much work, is destructive, is sick, etc. and we can only suggest they contact a vet or rescue group

Puppy factories, can be large or small,(but are often large-scale commercial enterprises and we understand that investigations and rescues have revealed that in some instances hundreds of breeding females have been kept). A puppy factory is an intensive dog breeding facilities, operating under inadequate conditions that do not meet dogs' behavioural, social and/or physiological needs. Some or all of the following will be present:

Extreme confinement , often in cages with wire floors or on bare concrete.

Unhygienic living conditions, often overcrowded, dimly-lit and dirty.

The animals may never get out of cages to exercise or socialise.

Inadequate vet care.

These conditions frequently lead to long-term health and/or behavioural problems in the breeding dogs and their puppies. Various ailments in puppies are drawn to our attention, often when the owner seeks our help to desex their animal. We cannot help in these cases and suggest a vet should be consulted. .

These puppies are seldom sold from the factory itself. In any case, the factories are frequently in remote locations and do not advertise their presence. There appears to be a high level of secrecy involved. The owners of these factories are fully aware that purchasers could well be shocked and not pursue their purchase if they saw the conditions the animals live in. Instead the puppies are sold through the internet, newspaper advertisements, pet shops, advertisements pinned up in shop windows, or from what appear to be private addresses but which are actually agents for the producers. Dogs are advertised on the internet, and anyone can purchase. There is no inspection of where the dogs come from, parentage etc.

Puppy factories often breed a number of different breeds, particularly catering to current taste. At the moment, for example cross breeds are popular, and they have probably been bred with no regard to possible health problems down the track, e.g. breathing difficulties, birthing difficulties inherited defects which are not apparent at first.

On the internet the photos of these puppies, playful, very appealing, would obviously attract buyers.

In the factory, when the puppies are ready for sale, the cage door is opened and the charming little puppies are scooped out of the barren cage or concrete pen where they have lived since birth, to be taken to the next phase of their lives. This moment probably comes when the mother can no longer feed them sufficiently and to keep them any longer would incur a cost to the operator.

We believe one of the saddest features of these breeding facilities is that the mother, who has nurtured her puppies since birth, sees them suddenly taken away from her, and she is left - bewildered and alone. Her fate is to be made pregnant again and the whole cycle begins again. One day her body will not be able to produce puppies in commercial numbers, and then the cage door will open for her and she will be taken away to be killed as no longer profitable. It is very unlikely that the operators will be concerned, as there are plenty more to take her place.

It is not possible to view this cynical, profit-making use of animals as anything but cruelty.

At the very least there is a need for a national system whereby dogs are permanently traceable to the breeder. There is also a need for enforceable national legislation, one aspect of which should be to ensure that all needs of the animals must be met.

Numbers of animals in the factories should be limited
Breeders should be licensed and breeding facilities inspected regularly.
Their location should be publicly known.
Animals should not be sold in petshops, markets or similar outlets.

Community education is very important, and the level at which it now exists needs to be greatly increased.

Such measures would, we believe, send a clear message to producers that breeding dogs will not be the easy money it has been in the past.

Ideally, Hunter Animal Watch would like to see an end to puppy factories in NSW and everywhere else in Australia.

We are concerned that many puppy factories may operate under the radar of the ATO. There is a lot of money involved, and we believe this important issue should be looked into.

On behalf of Hunter Animal Watch Inc.

Yours truly,

Olga Parkes
Hon. Sec.
Hunter Animal Watch Inc.



www.hunteranimalwatch.com.au