

**Submission  
No 83**

## **INQUIRY INTO PUPPY FARMING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Puppy farming (the indiscriminate breeding of dogs on a large scale for the purposes of sale) is inhumane and vile in every way possible so the fact that it remains legal is beyond comprehension. It needs to be made ILLEGAL – permanently!

Puppy farms are run purely for production and profit with little or no consideration given to the welfare of the animals. Puppy farms are intensive systems with breeding animals and their puppies kept in facilities that fail to meet the animals' psychological, behavioural, social or physiological needs. As a result, many of the animals kept under these circumstances have a very poor quality of life. Most puppy farms lack any structured facility plan or design and provide husbandry on an ad hoc basis only. Most puppy farms house animals in filthy, unhygienic conditions and whilst there are others that may be comparatively 'clean', dogs are still permanently confined in very small, barren cages and bred from continually, thereby failing to meet acceptable animal welfare standards.

Areas of concern -

Overcrowding and confinement:

Overcrowding is endemic at most puppy farms. Breeding dogs are often permanently confined in very small, barren cages, often shared with many other dogs, resulting in insufficient room to move around. In many cases, breeding dogs are forced to urinate, defecate, eat, sleep, give birth and care for their puppies in the same small area. They may never be allowed out of the cage, leading to psychological problems. Dogs and puppies are unable to express normal behaviours in such confinement (they have no space to exercise, play or explore) and this can lead to the development of repetitive behaviours and other psychological problems. Physical confinement also leads to the development of health problems. The bones and muscles of caged dogs are often weak and painful from the lack space and exercise. Being confined also prevents dogs and their puppies from having opportunities to socialise with humans and other animals.

Unsanitary conditions:

Conditions in puppy farms are often described with terms such as 'appalling', 'beyond belief' and 'sickening'. Animals can be found living in their own excrement, with dead puppies lying on the floor and general filth both inside cages and in general access areas. Unhygienic conditions promote infection and disease. Many puppy farms keep dogs on dirt floors. This is of particular concern as it creates an environment that is likely to harbour parasites and disease, including intestinal worms, fleas, ringworm and parvovirus. Dirt surfaces cannot be adequately disinfected for disease or parasite prevention. In other puppy farms open drains are used in kennels, creating a high potential for disease transmission. Cages and areas in which dogs are kept permanently may never be cleaned and the resulting odour is extremely aversive to both dogs and humans. Unhygienic conditions have a direct impact on the dogs – for example, any broken skin from scratching (fleas), wounds or abrasions from lying on wire can become easily infected.

Indiscriminate breeding:

Dogs in puppy farms are treated as production animals. To maximise productivity and profit, bitches are usually mated as soon as they are able to breed and then bred as frequently as possible. They are constantly either pregnant or feeding pups. This puts a tremendous strain on their bodies and combined with the poor nutrition, stress from overcrowding and unhygienic conditions inherent in puppy farms, the risk of postpartum infections such as mastitis and metabolic derangements such as eclampsia is very high. In addition, breeding bitches are often left to whelp unassisted and when complications arise, they are often not provided with the veterinary assistance they urgently require. As a result, they and their pups die or may suffer from permanent whelping-related medical problems for example, puppies with brain damage from

hypoxia. Puppy farmers also do not take into account the breeding animal's temperament, genetic makeup, any inherited conditions that they may suffer from or risk passing on to their offspring, or the relatedness of mating pairs, perhaps sentencing the dog to a lifetime of suffering.

#### Poor facilities:

Puppy farms are usually very poorly designed and lack any formal structure. The housing provided for dogs is usually inappropriate and completely inadequate. While there are some puppy farms that are purpose-built to house and breed a large number of animals for commercial purposes, these establishments can still fail to meet the animals' behavioural, psychological, social and physiological needs. Dogs in puppy farms are often kept in poorly made cages that fail to provide shelter from extreme temperatures. Those dogs housed outdoors are also often not provided with adequate shelter from the elements - heat, cold, sun, wind and rain. Many cages have uncovered wire-mesh flooring, often leading to the development of painful pressure sores that can become ulcerated and easily infected in the dirty environment. Puppies' and dogs' feet can fall through the wire mesh, getting caught and causing serious and painful injuries, which are often left untreated. There is often inadequate or no bedding or floor material provided. Inadequate lighting is another issue, with animals sometimes kept in the dark for days at a time. There is also often no system of ventilation or air flow through the premises.

#### Lack of basic care:

Adult dogs in puppy farms are usually not bathed, groomed or provided with the most basic necessary care, which leads to a host of health problems and suffering. Lack of bathing often leads to skin problems such as inflammation, urine scald and bacterial and fungal skin infections. Overgrown coats and matts of hair full of flea nests are common. Hair may become soaked with urine and faeces, placing the dogs at high risk of flystrike. Overgrown nails are common due to lack of exercise and lack of nail clipping, sometimes to the point where the nail grows back into the pads causing severe pain, infection, lameness and a reluctance or inability to move. Eyes and ears are seldom checked and the constant close contact with mud, dust, dirt, ammonia and excreta often leads to severe ocular and aural irritation and infection. Many dogs develop corneal ulceration. This is a painful condition and if left untreated, can lead to permanent blindness. Eye and ear problems can become chronic, requiring life-long and expensive treatment, affecting the ability to rehome the animals after rescue. Inadequate and inappropriate food and water is another serious issue. Animal welfare officers and investigators often report seeing many extremely skinny and emaciated dogs in these facilities. Inadequate and inappropriate food increases the susceptibility to disease and reduces the ability to withstand the stresses of constant breeding. Drinking water is often insufficient and/or it may be contaminated with dirt and excreta and not fit for consumption. Contaminated water transfers disease and causes serious gastrointestinal upsets involving diarrhoea and vomiting, which in turn can lead to dehydration, emaciation and death. This is even more serious during lactation as bitches need to drink more water to maintain a sufficient supply of milk for the pups.

#### Lack of veterinary care:

Puppy farm establishments are primarily concerned with making a profit and as a result veterinary care is often minimal or not provided at all. Preventative medicine including vaccinations, intestinal worm prevention, heartworm prevention, flea prevention, and general grooming and cleanliness are often not provided. As a result, dogs are highly susceptible to infectious disease, parasitic infestations and many acute and chronic conditions. Animals in puppy farms can suffer for their entire lives. The lack of preventative medicine combined with poor nutrition and stress leads to high rates of morbidity and mortality. In some cases, the mortality rate can be greater than 50%. Animals that manage to survive can continue to suffer

from chronic disease, may be weakened for long periods of time or may even be permanently affected (for example, post-distemper syndrome).

Poor socialisation:

Dogs are highly social 'pack' animals and under normal circumstances will be socialised with humans and other dogs from a young age. In puppy farms there is often minimal contact with humans. When contact with humans does occur it may be hostile or abnormal or limited. Pups often learn appropriate social behaviour from their mothers, but in many cases the mothers have never had the opportunity to experience normal interactions with humans. If pups are not socialised during their 'critical socialisation period' between 3-17 weeks of age they may display various negative behaviours such as fearfulness and aggression (aggression caused by underlying fear and anxiety) towards humans and other dogs. Under ideal circumstances pups also become familiar with other species (e.g. cats and birds), children, noises and various common objects they will encounter as pets such as bicycles, umbrellas, etc. through socialisation from an early age. This does not occur at puppy farms. In some cases behavioural problems resulting from poor socialisation may remain with the animals for their entire lives, reducing the potential to successfully rehome them after rescue. In severe cases, behavioural problems may be untreatable, rendering the animal unsuitable for rehoming.

In summarising all of the above, it is absolutely sickening that puppy farming has remained legal as long as it has. Animals are unable to speak for themselves so we, as humans, need to do better in protecting them and ensuring they are able to live a safe, happy, healthy existence. It's time we show compassion and a heart and stamp out puppy farming, permanently, forever!

Yours sincerely,  
Kirsty Scaife