Introduction to Puppy Mill Investigations

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Puppy Mill vs Breeder
What’s the difference?
Puppy Mill vs Breeder

Breeder

Puppy Mill vs Breeder

Puppy Mill

A puppy mill is a large-scale commercial dog breeding operation where profit is given priority over the well-being of the dogs.
Large Scale vs Small Scale

Commonly Observe
- Automatic feeders
- Automatic waterers
- Molded food
- Small, wire bottom cages
- Dogs housed indoors
- Untreated medical conditions
- Lack of grooming

What to look for
- Are they functioning as a breeding facility?
- Do they sell to individuals (local sales/internet) and pet stores or other wholesalers?
- Do they have a USDA license if selling wholesale?
- Document effects on animals
Housing in Wire Bottom Cages

• Confining within wire bottomed cages can lead to irritation and continual trauma of the interdigital aspect of their feet.
• The severity of the trauma to the foot is proportional to the gauge of the wire.
• A thinner wire will cause more trauma to the foot than will a thicker wire.
• Prolonged confinement in wire bottomed cages can lead to scar tissue formation. This is detected as thickening of the toe webbing due to chronic inflammation and injury.
• Irritation and injury also makes the skin more vulnerable to bacterial infections.
• Most of a dog's weight is distributed on the 3rd and 4th digits. In between these two digits is where you will see most lesions.
Behavioral Effects of Inadequate Housing

- Does not fulfill physical and/or social needs
- Leads to changes in physiology and abnormal or stereotypical behavior as the dog attempts to adapt to the stress
- Abnormal behavior may take the form of a reduced behavioral repertoire and/or the development of seemingly meaningless behavior
- Stereotypical behavior is repetitive, invariant behavior patterns with no obvious goal or function (Mason, 1991)
- Stereotypes occur in situations where the animal lacks control of its environment and is an indicator of poor welfare (Prescott, 2004)
Stereotypical Behavior

- Pacing
- Excessive barking
- Circling
- Wall bouncing
- Compulsive staring
- Licking
- Bar biting

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Small Scale

Commonly Observe
- Outdoor housing
- Inadequate shelter
- Dirty living conditions
- Inadequate or no water
- Poor water quality
- Untreated medical conditions
- Lack of grooming

What to look for
- Do they sell to individuals (local sales and internet)?
- Navigate website
Medical Conditions to Document

- Dehydration
- Untreated medical conditions
- Severe dental disease
- BCS
- Ocular conditions
- Ear infections
- Testicular and mammary tumors
- Infectious diseases
- External and internal parasites
- Ringworm

- Effects of wire bottom cages
- Effects of limited or no exercise
- Effects of prolonged exposure to unsanitary living conditions
- Effects of lack of grooming

Grooming
Grooming

Medical Conditions
Medical Conditions

And you never know what else you may find…
Investigative Techniques

- Sales websites
- Better Business Bureau – BBB
- Zoning Office
- Environmental Protection Agency – EPA
- Department of Natural Resources – DNR
- Facebook or Social Media
- Prior charges/convictions

Other Crimes that may be involved...

- Consumer fraud (marketing and selling sick dogs)
- Environmental crimes (waste)
- Employee safety (ammonia levels)
- Unlicensed practice of veterinary medicine
- Tax evasion/fraud
- Civil nuisance abatement
Questions?

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