



## Executive Summary

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**Issue Description:** Ban on Puppy/Kitten Mill Pet Store Sales

**Meeting Date:** June 11, 2018

**Attendees:** Eric Baker and Jennifer Cannon

**Action Requested At This Meeting:** Review outreach plan and policy considerations for banning pet store sales of dogs and cats sourced from puppy/kitten mills and provide input to staff.

### Background

Currently, pet shops located in unincorporated Kitsap County can legally sell puppies and kittens obtained from large-scale breeding operations referred to as “puppy mills” and “kitten factories”, respectively. The US Department of Agriculture estimates that over 10,000 of these “wholesale breeding” establishments are in existence nationwide and many operate under horrible conditions consisting of overcrowded cages, over and in-breeding, absence of sanitation and vet treatment for serious health issues, and lack of socialization and exercise. The County has an opportunity to join other nearby local jurisdictions in deterring animal cruelty by closing the gap in the prohibition of puppy/kitten mill retail to more fully promote animal welfare and health, and encourage best practices and community awareness in the purchasing and breeding of dogs and cats.

Although state and federal laws deter animal cruelty, the difficulty with enforcement and policy loopholes has led over 200 local jurisdictions to implement additional restrictions.<sup>1</sup> Three of these are jurisdictions located in Washington state and Kitsap County (Cities of Bremerton and Poulsbo, and Bainbridge Island). These jurisdictions have passed ordinances to ban pet store sales from puppy/kitten mills by only allowing sales from animal rescue league or shelters and requiring recordkeeping to disclose where they originated. Poulsbo differs by excluding small-scale breeders from the sale restrictions (defined as owning less than five female breeding dogs/cats) and other jurisdictions don’t allow breeders to sell at pet stores since they want the relationship between the purchaser and breeder to be direct. Although existing County code includes provisions to

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<sup>1</sup> There was a 2010 investigation completed by the Office of Inspector General that exposed horrible conditions perpetuating even in licensed “wholesale” breeding facilities. Washington state law prevents persons from owning more than 50 breeding dogs and requires suitable housing and animal welfare measures for those owning 10 to 50 breeding dogs (RCW 16.52.310). In addition, state law requires veterinary inspection and heartworm testing certificates for dogs/cats imported from outside the state (RCW 16.54.170).

promote animal welfare by requiring commercial pet facilities and hobbyist breeders to gain licenses necessitating adherence to some animal welfare provisions, pet shops currently can sell dogs/cats obtained from any variety of sources including puppy/kitten mills.

- Commercial Pet Facilities: At commercial pet facilities (such as pet shops), pets are boarded or bred for the primary purpose of compensation or resale. These facilities must be licensed and must comply with operation requirements to promote health and proper veterinary care.
- Hobbyist Breeders: A “Hobbyist” is someone who owns or maintains five to ten adult cats/dogs at the same location, where one or more are not spayed or neutered. The existing code limits hobbyist breeders from owning more than 10 breeding dogs/cats and selling more than two litters or 20 cats/dogs per year and allows small-scale animal breeding primarily for non-commercial purposes. They must obtain a license and adhere to several animal welfare provisions which promote pet health and proper veterinary care.

### **Ordinance Options**

Kitsap County could ban sales from puppy mills/kitten factories by only allowing pet store sales from animal shelters/leagues or they could only allow sales from animal shelters/leagues and small-scale licensed hobbyist breeders, adhering to animal welfare protections. A stakeholder outreach process is proposed to inform the development of ordinance alternatives. A series of interviews are proposed with different representative interests including the Kitsap County Human Society, animal control officers enforcing these provisions, local breeders, and planners from other jurisdictions with circumstances similar to the County. Interviews could first be convened with planners involved with the development of similar policies to learn best practices (i.e. Cities of Poulsbo, Bremerton, and Bainbridge Island, etc.).

### **Considerations:**

- What outreach to the community should we include for developing the ordinance alternatives? Which stakeholders should be included?
- Should the existing definition for hobbyist breeders only allowing licensed hobbyists to own five to ten breeding cats/dogs be kept or refined to better promote animal welfare?
- Would those owning less than five breeding cats/dogs be impacted by not allowing them to sell puppies/kittens at pet stores?
- What are the best practices and lessons learned from other local jurisdictions?
- How can the County best close loopholes and clarify definitions for commercial pet facilities and hobbyist breeding to clearly prohibit large-scale breeding of puppies/kittens?
- Should sales of kittens/puppies too young to be separated from their mother be prohibited too?
- What is the penalty for violating the ordinance?
- How can we make enforcement more feasible to deter violations?