

HB 439
Montana Commercial Pet Protection Act

Fact Sheet

<p>WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS BILL?</p>	<p>This bill will ensure that animals that are bred, sold, and adopted in Montana are healthy and do not have unknown diseases or injuries that cause suffering to the animals and that are financially and emotionally expensive to purchasers and adopters.</p>
<p>WHY DO WE NEED THIS LAW?</p>	<p>Puppy mills harm Montana families, responsible breeders and dogs. Most commercial dog breeders are responsible breeders who take care of their dogs and sell healthy puppies. However, there may be as many as 20-25 “puppy mills” in Montana. A “puppy mill” is a commercial dog breeder that is more interested in profits than in raising healthy puppies. Puppies from puppy mills are often raised in cruel and deplorable conditions and have genetic disorders and other diseases. Puppies from puppy mills are sold directly to individuals through newspaper ads, social media and the internet. They are also sold to pet stores. Families don’t know the adorable puppies they purchase from puppy mills are often sick. The financial and emotional costs of bringing a sick dog home are heartbreaking.</p> <p>Nobody inspects commercial dog breeders in Montana. The federal Animal Welfare Act does not cover animals that are sold directly to consumers. Even facilities that are covered by the AWA are rarely inspected. Although many commercial dog breeders belong to the American Kennel Club or other kennel clubs, these organizations usually do not inspect the breeding facilities.</p> <p>The cost of rescuing animals from a puppy mill is enormous. In 2008, rescuing nearly 200 English Shepherds from a puppy mill near Billings cost Yellowstone County over \$250,000. The recent rescue of 161 Malamutes in Jefferson County cost close to \$500,000. These costs do not include costs incurred by individual families who adopted sick animals from these puppy mills.</p>
<p>WHAT DOES THIS BILL DO?</p>	<p>This bill sets up a registration and inspection program for large-scale commercial dog breeders in Montana. This bill does not set the standards of care the facilities will have to meet. Instead, it requires the Department of Livestock to set those standards for housing, food, water, bedding, animal health and breeding. Breeders will have the opportunity to help write the standards of care.</p> <p>This bill asks large-scale commercial dog breeders to help pay the costs of inspection as a part of doing business in Montana. Registration fees range from \$125-\$650, based on the number of breeding females.</p>
<p>WILL THIS BILL AFFECT ALL ANIMAL BREEDERS IN MONTANA?</p>	<p>No. This bill only affects commercial dog breeders with 11 or more breeding females. This bill does not affect small breeders or farmers and ranchers. This bill only applies to dogs. It does not apply to livestock or any other commercial animals.</p>