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Happy New Year to you! In honor of this new year I have a rather bold request to make of you. Please add a new line item to your list of New Year's resolutions, and it goes something like this:

Before the end of 2015, I resolve to do at least one thing to help eradicate puppy mills!

What are Puppy Mills?

For those unfamiliar with the term "puppy mills" (aka, commercial breeding facilities) they are dog breeding operations in which the health and the physical and psychological well-being of the dogs are disregarded in order to maintain a low overhead and maximize profits. In spite of this grim definition, there are more than 4,000 licensed puppy mills operating within the United States. And there is no telling just how many unlicensed puppy factories are in operation.

Business is booming for puppy millers because people continue to willingly purchase puppies from pet stores. Retail pet stores sell more than 500,000 pups a year, ninety-nine percent plus of which are born in puppy mills. The other source of income for puppy millers is their Internet "livestock sales." Their attractive websites entice unwitting individuals to purchase puppies sight unseen.

Your New Year's Resolution

What are you willing to do to help eradicate puppy mills? Here are some ideas to consider:

- If you've been purchasing products from a pet store that sells puppies, immediately stop and desist! Put the icing on the cake by having a candid conversation with the store manager advising him or her exactly why you will be taking your business elsewhere.
- Take the [ASPCA's official No Pet Store Puppies Pledge](#) stating that you won't spend a single dime at a pet store that sells puppies. Tweet

about this pledge and post it on your Facebook page.

- Educate others about how to avoid a puppy mill purchase. Encourage potential adopters to work through [shelters](#), [rescue organizations](#), and/or responsible breeders.
- Be a voice of change within your community, particularly if you live in a state where puppy mills are thriving (Missouri, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Iowa, Arkansas, to name a few). Attend an organized rally (consider organizing one yourself), sign a petition, and write letters to your legislators.
- Volunteer some time with an organization that provides rehabilitation, foster care, and placement of adult dogs who have been rescued from puppy mill breeding programs.
- If you have cared for a puppy mill dog, share your story with others. Talk and write about your experiences.

Thank you for letting me "butt in" on your list of New Year's resolutions. Please share what you hope to do in 2015 to help eradicate puppy mills.

Wishing you much good health and happiness throughout this new year.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.