

COMPANION ANIMALS

Help Cats, Dogs & Critters



In a perfect world, animals would be free to live their lives to the fullest: raising their young, enjoying their native environments, and following their natural instincts. However, domesticated animals cannot survive "free" in our concrete jungles, so we must take as good care of them as possible. People with the time, money, love, and patience to make a lifetime commitment to an animal can make an enormous difference by adopting from shelters or rescuing animals from a perilous life on the street.

THREATS TO COMPANIONS

OVERPOPULATION: About 4 million "excess" dogs and cats will be killed in shelters this year, while millions of homeless animals live short, hard, hungry lives on the streets, only to die miserably from disease, injury, or predation. About 1/3 of animals in shelters are purebreds, either intentionally or accidentally bred.

PUPPY MILLS: Few people can resist looking in the pet shop window to see what cute puppies and kittens might be inside. But a closer look into how pet shops obtain animals reveals a system in which the high price paid for "that doggie in the window" pales in comparison to the cost paid by the animals themselves. The vast majority of dogs sold in pet shops, up to half a million a year, are raised in "puppy mills," breeding kennels that are notorious for their cramped, crude, and filthy conditions and their continuous breeding of unhealthy and hard-to-socialize animals.

GREYHOUND RACING: Thousands of greyhounds are killed each year by the greyhound racing industry. Although only about 30 percent of the greyhounds born in the industry will ever touch a racetrack, greyhounds who do qualify to become racers at 18 months typically live in cages, some as small as three foot by three foot, for roughly 22 hours each day. Some are kept muzzled by their trainers almost constantly.

DOG FIGHTING: Illegal dog fighting remains a pervasive practice in many cities. Trainers prepare a dog to fight by imposing a cruel regimen on the dog from the beginning of its life. Trainers starve dogs to make them mean, hit dogs to make them tough, and force dogs to run on treadmills for long periods of time or endure other exhausting exercise. In order to foster the viciousness of dogs, trainers bait them with puppies, cats, and other small animals.

EXOTIC ANIMALS: Many people appreciate the mystic and beauty of exotic animals such as reptiles, fish, amphibians, birds or mammals of non-native species. They succumb to the temptation of purchasing critters, reptiles, birds, fish, amphibians and other exotic animals. Exotic animals and critters are not domesticated. It is inhumane to confine them for human amusement. If you must have an exotic animal or critter, adopt.



THREATS TO COMPANIONS

CAT & DOG FUR: Millions of dogs and cats are killed each year in the fur trade. Dog and cat breeders operate primarily in China and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Breeders sell cat and dog furs to companies in Europe, who incorporate the fur and skin of the animals into clothing and products such as cat toys or stuffed animals. Products consisting partially or wholly of cat and dog fur are then sold to buyers in Europe, America and elsewhere.

PET THEFT: Some 5 million family companion animals are reported missing annually. Based on "pet theft" reports, it is conservatively estimated that approximately 1.5 to 2 million of these missing companion animals are taken forcibly, or by deception, through so-called "Free to Good Home" ads. Dogs and cats are sold to many different clients for many uses, including dog-fighting rings as fighters or as bait, to puppy mills for breeding, as meat for human consumption, as prey for exotic animals, as fur for clothing or accessories, as protective guard dogs, or for cult rituals.



DOG LABS: A number of medical schools continue using dog labs. Dog labs are cruel and useless to a medical student's understanding of the human body.

OUTSIDE DOGS: Dogs forced to live outside, alone and away from their families, live sad lives. Such a life goes against a dog's two most basic instincts: the pack and the den. A dog brings you the gifts of steadfast devotion, abiding love, and joyful companionship. An outdoor dog has an address, not a home. Dogs offer real value as companion ani-



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mals. Stop behavior problems and start enjoying real protection and companionship. Bring your dogs inside. If neighbors have an outside dog, offer to walk and socialize the dog and encourage them to bring the dog in.

COSMETIC SURGERY: Declawing cats is a painful and permanently crippling procedure that causes permanent physical and psychological damage to the animals. It includes at least 10 amputations. Tail docking and ear cropping are barbaric mutilations of dogs purely for cosmetic reasons.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

SPAY & NEUTER: By being a responsible caregiver and sterilizing your companion animals, you avoid contributing to this terrible problem of pet overpopulation.

ADOPT – DON'T SHOP: Don't support the inhumane puppy mill and backyard breeding industry. Always adopt from a shelter or rescue group.

BOYCOTT THE ANIMAL ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY: Dog fighting, greyhound racing, circuses and other forms of animal entertainment are inhumane. Do not support the animal entertainment industry.

TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN FERAL CATS: Feral (untame) cats are wild and not suitable for life indoors. However, feral cats can still live happy lives outside if supervised, fed and cared for. Spaying and neutering the cats stabilizes the population at manageable levels, eliminates "annoying" behaviors associated with mating, is more effective and less costly than repeated attempts at eradication, is humane to the animals and fosters compassion in the community.

DON'T DECLAW: A cat's claws are used to capture prey, for climbing, and in self-defense. Claws are an integral part of a cat's life. There are effective and humane alternatives to declawing that can reduce or eliminate clawing damage.

DON'T CROP OR DOCK: Mutilating an animal for cosmetic reasons is inhumane and unethical. Don't support clubs and organizations that endorse these horrific practices.

HELP STOP ANIMAL ABUSE: If you've seen an animal being abused, please do something to stop it. Find out who in your town, county, or state investigates and enforces the anti-cruelty codes. Often, these people work for local humane societies, societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals (SPCAs), or taxpayer-funded animal shelters. If you cannot locate the proper person, call or visit your local sheriff's office or police department to ask for help in enforcing the law.

LET WILD ANIMALS BE WILD: Wild animals deserve to be wild and can never be truly tamed. Let wildlife be wild. For the animals' sake, and for your health and safety, please do not buy exotic animals as "pets."