

## Pet Store Chain Denies Puppy Mill Claim

**HSUS says stores deal with “massive” commercial dog breeders.**

Updated: November 26, 2008, 7 p.m. EST

An investigation by The Humane Society of the United States that prompted the organization to allege that Petland sells puppies bred under cruel conditions was dismissed on the national pet store chain's corporate website as “sensationalism at its best.”

At a news conference Thursday in Washington, HSUS said that an eight-month probe contradicted assurances by staff at Petland stores and on Petland's website that the company deals only with dog breeders who have “the highest standards of pet care.”

A Petland representative was not immediately available to comment Thursday, and a recorded message referred media inquiries about the investigation to a prepared statement on the company's website. In a written response, Petland said the information reported by HSUS was false.

“Reports such as those posted on the HSUS website surface every year around the holiday season in conjunction with their annual fundraising efforts,” Petland stated. “Unfortunately, we were not interviewed or consulted nor were we a part of any of the editing process.”

The HSUS said investigators visited 21 Petland stores — in Florida, Indiana, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, and elsewhere — and traced the origins of about 17,000 puppies shipped to the stores. They also visited various Petland breeders and suppliers.

The HSUS said its investigation revealed that puppies sold at these stores came from “massive” commercial breeders in Missouri and other states in the Midwest where hundreds of breeding dogs are packed into “filthy, crowded cages.”

Petland said it was “outraged” to see that HSUS would intentionally use video footage of unrelated kennels in the investigative report to try to mislead the general public into believing these facilities have a connection to Petland. The HSUS said its investigation included video footage, which was posted online as part of a compilation of images that portray dogs kept in cages. According to Kathleen Summers of the HSUS, the images and video clips are meant to give a general overview of several investigations into commercial breeders across the country, including the Petland case.