Introduction
I. Attention-getter: Imagine this: A little girl and her mother leave Target with several shopping bags. The girl is very bored after spending hours watching her mother shop for "grown up things" and being told she couldn’t have this or that. But then, she sees the shop next to Target, and her eyes light up. Ok, so it’s not a candy store or a Build-a-Bear Workshop. But it’s the next best thing – that’s right – a pet store. And today, they have a litter of Golden Retriever puppies displayed in the window. Instantly the girl’s boredom vanishes, and she begs her mom to go inside the store. Once inside, one of the energetic puppies jumps up against the glass walls and looks up at them with such innocent, sweet eyes. The mother and daughter fall in love with him immediately. And soon, they walk out of the store with another purchase. Actually, this isn’t very hard to imagine. In fact, this is an all-too-common occurrence.

II. Establishment of ethos: However, there is another side to this story; one that I’ve become very familiar with through my volunteer work at the Humane Society; the story begins with puppy mills or dog breeding facilities.

III. Thematic statement: Because of the horrible conditions at these puppy mills and the severe overpopulation crisis, the most responsible way to buy a pet is through your local animal shelter.

IV. Preview: Today, I’ll explain the problems associated with puppy mills, their causes, and practical solutions we can take to help solve these issues.
(Transition: For starters, puppy mills or dog breeding facilities have created several severe problems.)

Body
I. For starters, puppy mills or dog breeding facilities have created several severe problems.
   a. First of all, the sheer existence of dog breeding facilities only worsens the pet overpopulation crisis.
      i. In fact, the Doris Day Animal League estimated earlier this year that 5 million dogs and cats were euthanized by shelters annually simply because they couldn’t find homes for them and ran out of room.
      ii. The New York Times estimated in 2006 that this number equates to more than half of all dogs and cats admitted to animal shelters.
      iii. And this number doesn’t even include all the stray cats and dogs.
   b. Furthermore, the conditions at most of these puppy mills are horrific.
      i. In December of 2006, Christina Matthies, a writer for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals or PETA, explained how the dogs are caged in "wood and wire outdoor hutches, denied proper nutrition and veterinary care, given algae-coated water, and forced to sit in their own waste."
Consequently, the dogs develop many diseases such as epilepsy, cataracts, eye lesions, and mammary tumors according to the Last Chance for Animals.

iii. These sick animals you're looking at now are breeding dogs. They are kept constantly pregnant and their puppies are taken away from them often before they are weaned. Then after 6 or 7 years of this, when they can no longer reproduce, they are killed, without ever knowing a gentle touch or a kind voice.

(Internal Summary: Clearly, the problems associated with puppy mills have become intolerable.)

(Transition: But how did they grow so out of control?)

II. The answer lies within legislation and us.

a. Although the Animal Welfare Act was passed over 35 years ago to protect animals from this kind of abuse, enforcement of this law has been weak and puppy mills have found loopholes.
   i. In 2007, PETA estimated that 70 inspectors have been assigned to cover more than 8,300 facilities nationwide. So, inspections are spotty at best, announced ahead of time, and often result in minor fines.
   ii. Additionally, by selling dogs over the internet or through the newspaper, puppy mills become classified as "retail" pet stores and are exempt from the Animal Welfare Act, according to the Humane Society.

b. However, we can only blame ourselves for the puppy mills' existence.
   i. They wouldn't be in business if they weren't making money. I'm sure most of our families have bought a dog, cat, bird, rabbit, or even a fish from a pet store at some point. Most of these animals come from breeders.
   (Internal Summary: Unknowingly, we've been supporting their inhumane treatment of animals and must bear some responsibility for these animals' sufferings.)
   (Transition: However, we hold the power to change all of that.)

III. However, we hold the power to change all of that.

a. By simply adopting a dog from an animal shelter instead of buying one at a pet store, you're saving a life and hurting the puppy mills' business.
   i. Oftentimes, animals at shelters make better pets anyways. They have received veterinary care, proper food and water, and love and attention, while puppies from puppy mills often have parasites or infections and personality disorders from lack of socialization.
   ii. Nevertheless, some people are interested in a particular breed of dog and think the pet store is the best place to buy it. That's exactly why the puppy mills have become such a huge problem. But the good news is that the Humane Society estimated in 2006 that 25% of dogs in shelters are purebred. So, just ask a worker at the animal shelter for some help finding that breed of dog.

b. Another step to stopping puppy mills is writing to the government about better enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act or to pet store managers about puppy mills.
   i. PETA offers great sample letters and links on their website.
We have a variety of opportunities to help these suffering animals.

(Transition: To conclude, we can end this animal abuse by buying pets from animal shelters and spreading the word about the horrors of puppy mills.)

Conclusion

I. Summarize: To conclude, we can end this animal abuse by buying pets from animal shelters and spreading the word about the horrors of puppy mills.

II. Review: We’ve seen the problems they create, why they continue to exist, and ways to bring about their end.

III. Tie to the introduction: Do you remember the story I started about the little girl, her mother, and their new Golden Retriever puppy? Well, the mother quickly became frustrated with his antics and the loss of several vases due to persistent tail wagging. And after a few months, she realized they didn’t have the backyard for a full-grown Golden Retriever. So, they decided to give him up, and the local animal shelter took him in. He missed his family, but soon became excited for a new home. However, everyone at the shelter was looking for a young puppy, so week after week, he waited. Then one day, the shelter took in a litter of abandoned puppies and needed more room.

IV. Creative concluding thought: I’m all too familiar with this ending. I’ve witnessed it hundreds of times at the Humane Society. A perfectly healthy and innocent dog euthanized. But this isn’t how it has to end, if we have the will and the desire to change it.

References


