

## **What Is A RESPONSIBLE BREEDER**

### **By Shirley Patterson Former Secretary of the YTCA**

A puppy mill is a mass dog breeding establishment that produces puppies for profit by selling them wholesale to the pet industry. Many puppy mills are characterized by overcrowding, filth, inadequate shelter, and insufficient food, water, and veterinary care. Most puppy mill owners sell their dogs wholesale to brokers, who in turn, sell them primarily to pet stores. Because profit, not quality dogs, is the ultimate goal of the puppy mill owner, breeding practices are often shoddy, and the breeding dogs are kept under the most inexpensive possible conditions that will keep them alive and producing.

In contrast, there are hundreds of responsible and reputable kennels and breeding establishments throughout the country whose owners make a profit, but not at the expense of their dogs. Whether these breeders are full-time professionals making an entire living from a kennel, or hobby breeders with 5 or 10 animals, the responsible breeder is as concerned with improving the quality of the breed, by showing or belonging to a breed club, than he or she is at making money. Customers wishing to buy puppies from these breeders are welcome to inspect the premises and in most cases, to meet the puppies parents.

In between the puppy mill operators and the responsible kennel owners are the so-called " backyard breeders" whose newspaper ads dot Sunday papers each week. These are people who own one or two purebred dogs and produce a litter of puppies once a year or so for extra money or " because I want my dog to have the experience of being a mother before I get her spayed or Aunt Tillie would like to have a puppy just like my mine." Like puppy mill puppies these animals are often haphazardly bred with no regard to the consequences and their offspring will most often suffer the same consequences.

As secretary for the YTCA I answer an enormous amount of calls each day. I spend at least half the day conversing with many first time pet buyers who seek to have guidance in finding a healthy pet and also the best breed for their individual life style. I also talk to many individuals who have already purchased a pet and are now experiencing problems be it minor ( Why are my Yorkies ears not standing up?) to more serious health problems and what to do about them since now there is no one interested or concerned enough about the puppy to answer these questions.

A Responsible breeder will give each puppy the socialization that it needs and this requires a great deal of devotion and patience . They are responsible for each puppy that they have bred. (The puppies new owner will reap these benefits.) Their dogs are their number one concern as they are completely dependent on them for their care, training and medical attention. Their dogs are "special " to them .

My own personal feeling is "If you are making money in dogs, you are either overbreeding or your dogs are not receiving the proper medical attention that they so deserve.