

# Arizona Pet Store Chain Imports Puppies from Illegal Breeding Operations

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- [Animal Wellness Action](#) (AWA)

and Bailing Out Benji (BOB) today called upon the cities of Tempe and Tucson, and the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office to investigate allegations that local pet stores known as "Puppies 'N Love" and "Animal Kingdom" are purchasing puppies from certain breeders in violation of Arizona state law.

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*Lain Kahlstrom, Director of State Affairs at Animal Wellness Action*

Puppies 'N Love and Animal Kingdom buy and truck puppies in from puppy mills in the Midwest for sale in their stores. Most puppy mills have hundreds of dogs on a single property, making it virtually impossible for these operators to properly socialize the animals, provide adequate veterinary care, allow the animals to live in suitable housing that is protected from the elements, and exhibit their natural behaviors.

“Our investigation uncovered irrefutable evidence these pet stores are violating Arizona's state law,” said Lain Kahlstrom, Director of State Affairs at Animal Wellness Action. “These pet store owners are fraudulently representing to customers they don't procure dogs from puppy mills but, in fact, they are getting dogs from high-volume, out-of-state breeders with direct violations of the Animal Welfare Act.”

In 2016, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey signed SB1248 into law in an ill-fated attempt to stop pet stores from obtaining puppies from some of the worst puppy mills, while simultaneously taking away the ability for Arizona cities to ban the sale of puppy mill dogs at the local level. The law stipulated that pet stores were not to buy dogs from breeders with Animal Welfare Act violations uncovered by U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors during the last two years.

Through a public records request to Arizona's Department of Agriculture, Bailing Out Benji and Animal Wellness Action obtained records from 2017 to early 2020. The records detail that approximately 250 puppies from out-of-state breeders with direct violations of the Animal Welfare Act were shipped to the named pet stores during that timeframe, and re-sold to the public.

Sugarfork Kennels: received a direct violation of the Animal Welfare Act in Oct 2017. For the following two years, Puppies 'N Love and Animal Kingdom imported approximately 237 puppies from this breeding facility.

Wilbur Byler: received a direct violation in October 2019. Since that time, at least 10 puppies have arrived in Arizona for resale at the named stores.

The state law also provides that pet stores must list the name and license of the breeder on each cage and in any electronic marketing, so that the public may research the breeders themselves. The pet stores do not comply fully with this legal standard either. BOB and AWA have documented instances of missing and incorrect information on cages, making it nearly impossible for buyers to receive the appropriate information about where their puppy came from.

"This pet store chain had this law written just for them and they lobby for it to stay in place every single year – and they couldn't even follow the law that they helped write and pass for themselves," said Nicole Galvan, Arizona Director of Bailing Out Benji. "The scary thing is that other pet stores in other states are lobbying to copy this law – to preempt cities from banning these deplorable business practices outright."

"When the state passed the puppy mill preemption law, it cut short efforts in Tucson, Tempe and in the Phoenix area to clamp down on the horrendous exploitation of puppies that was happening then, and continues to occur," said Steve Kozachik, Tucson City Council member, representing Ward 6. Through this joint effort we've been able to demonstrate that reality to the legislators who put the profits of a few ahead



Arizona Pet Store Investigation on Companion Pets, Inc. | Photo: Bailing Out Benji

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Animal Wellness Brands Logo



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of a moral obligation to address the problem. I'm hopeful that now they'll understand the importance of removing that preemption so local jurisdictions can work to put an end to the puppy mill industry."

More than 350 local governments and 3 states throughout the U.S. have enacted ordinances to ban pet stores from selling dogs sourced from puppy mills. And in Congress, Reps. Charlie Crist (D-Fla.) and Guy Reschenthaler (R-Pa.) have introduced the Petfax Act, which would establish a federal law requiring sellers of dogs and cats to disclose certain information about the animal, including the source and number of dogs being bred. That bill would also make it illegal to misrepresent the source of the animal.

Additionally, the months-long investigation uncovered possible violations of federal law. The stores are openly engaging in activities that mandate regular USDA inspection. Under current federal law, pet stores are exempt from USDA inspection because that is where puppies, buyers and sellers meet. However, when puppies are housed at an intermediary site, and when puppies are displayed at other locations to engage with the public for promotional purposes, those activities are not covered by the pet store exemption, and are thus subject to inspection. Thus far, these inspections have not happened.

"Arizona law relating to pet stores' sourcing of animals is weak, and difficult to enforce", said Terry Goddard, a former Attorney General of AZ. "It's my hope that legislators will take a serious look at the massive amount of work that had to be done in preparation for the recent enforcement and take the appropriate steps to amend the law to make enforcement more efficient so we can end the puppy mill system of irresponsible breeding."

If you bought a puppy from either Puppies 'N Love or Animal Kingdom and are concerned about the source of your puppy, or if your puppy was sick, please contact us at: [info@bailingoutbenji.com](mailto:info@bailingoutbenji.com).

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

Bailing Out Benji is a small, non-profit organization that is dedicated to educating the public and providing them with the most current and accurate data regarding the puppy mill industry. Our research is used by the leading animal welfare organizations across the country, because what we do is so unique and important. We make big changes with very few resources. Whether we are peacefully protesting, educating or rescuing and transporting dogs- we are making an

impression wherever we go. We are a volunteer based 501c3 nonprofit organization.

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