

Iowa Voters Support Stronger Oversight of Puppy Mills by Nearly Ten-to-One Margin

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New Survey Reveals Overwhelming Support for Legislation to Protect Pets from Cruelty and Abuse

A recent statewide survey by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. reveals that 86 percent of Iowa voters support legislation that would strengthen protections for dogs in large-scale breeding facilities known as puppy mills, while only 9 percent oppose tougher regulations. Overwhelming margins in every demographic group — men, women, Democrats, Republicans and Independents — support legislation to crack down on puppy mills. Iowa is the third-largest puppy mill state in the country.

Bills to strengthen Iowa's oversight of puppy mills — H.F. 486 by Rep. Jim Lykam, D-85, and S.F. 265 by veterinarian Sen. Joe Seng, D-43 — have been introduced and are awaiting committee action. Puppy mills are mass dog breeding facilities that keep animals in factory farm confinement, often in filthy wire cages stacked on top of each other, with no exercise, socialization, or human interaction. Dogs from puppy mills are sold in pet stores, over the Internet, and directly to consumers with little or no regard for the dog's health or genetic history.

Currently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture licenses and inspects some puppy mills, but only those that sell wholesale to pet stores — not those that sell over the Internet or directly to the public. Iowa is one of only two states (along with Kansas) where state officials are not able to inspect these puppy mills, even if complaints have been reported. The new legislation would give the Iowa Department of Agriculture the authority to inspect these facilities if they receive complaints.

The bill would not affect responsible breeders, who already keep their dogs in humane conditions, or the livestock community. It also will not require the Iowa Department of Agriculture to spend any additional resources, but simply will give the agency additional tools for pursuing investigations and enforcement if they choose to do so.

"Thousands of dogs are suffering in puppy mills throughout our state. These dogs will never know the pleasure of a treat, a toy or the feeling of grass under their feet. They are treated not like family pets, but like a cash crop," said Carol Griglione, The HSUS' Iowa state director. "Our state agencies should have the authority to check out any complaints of mistreatment, and now these dogs at least have hope for some expanded protections."

The survey also revealed that Iowa voters strongly support other legislative proposals to protect animals. Bills that would allow courts to issue protective orders for pets that belong to victims of domestic violence — H.F. 32 and S.F. 119, also introduced by Rep. Lykam and Sen. Seng — would help keep both people and animals safe from their abusers. The poll showed that 72 percent of Iowa voters support the measure, while only 16 percent oppose it.

Up to 75 percent of domestic violence victims who have pets report that their partners have threatened or killed their animals. As many as 48 percent of domestic violence victims refuse to leave their abusers because they fear a pet will be left in harm's way. The new legislation would allow courts to issue protective orders to include pets along with the people who are threatened by domestic abuse.

Generally speaking, 83 percent of Iowa voters said they support stronger legislation to promote the humane treatment of animals, while only 10 percent disagreed. The full text of the survey questions and results are below.

To learn more about puppy mills, visit humanesociety.org/puppymills.

To learn more about animal cruelty and domestic violence, visit humanesociety.org/firststrike.

The telephone survey of 625 Iowa voters was conducted statewide by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. from Feb. 19 through Feb. 21, 2009. The margin of error is plus or minus 4 percent.

QUESTION: Puppy mills are large-scale breeding facilities that sell puppies on the Internet and to pet stores. Currently some of these facilities are licensed and inspected once a year by the US Department of Agriculture, while many are not even subject to these minimal inspections. At puppy mills mother dogs are often bred every heat cycle, year after year, and puppies are caged in unhealthy conditions with no exercise, socialization, or human interaction. Do you support or oppose legislation that would give the state the authority to inspect puppy mills?

	<u>STATE</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>WOMEN</u>	<u>DEMS</u>	<u>REPS</u>	<u>INDS</u>
SUPPORT	86%	80%	92%	85%	87%	87%
OPPOSE	9%	12%	6%	11%	7%	9%
UNDECIDED	5%	8%	2%	4%	6%	4%

QUESTION: In domestic violence situations, some victims refuse to leave their abusers because they fear a pet will be left in harm's way and about 75% of domestic violence victims with pets report that their partners have threatened or killed animals. Do you support or oppose legislation that would allow courts to issue protective orders to include pets along with the people who are threatened by domestic abuse?

	<u>STATE</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>WOMEN</u>	<u>DEMS</u>	<u>REPS</u>	<u>INDS</u>
SUPPORT	72%	61%	83%	76%	62%	76%
OPPOSE	16%	27%	5%	12%	25%	12%
UNDECIDED	12%	12%	12%	12%	13%	12%

QUESTION: Generally speaking, do you support or oppose state legislators' efforts to ensure humane treatment of animals, including increased penalties for abuse and providing adequate resources and authority for inspections and investigations concerning animal cruelty?

	<u>STATE</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>WOMEN</u>	<u>DEMS</u>	<u>REPS</u>	<u>INDS</u>
SUPPORT	83%	73%	93%	88%	73%	83%
OPPOSE	10%	17%	3%	6%	18%	12%
UNDECIDED	7%	10%	4%	6%	9%	5%

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The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization — backed by 11 million Americans, or one of every 28. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty — On the web at humanesociety.org.