



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Undercover investigation reveals sick and dying puppies at pet stores in Nevada

A Humane Society of the United States investigator called law enforcement after finding a dying puppy in one store; other pups were lethargic and vomiting

At least one puppy died, and several others were found with severe ailments, during a Humane Society of the United States investigation of six puppy stores in Nevada.

An investigator with a hidden camera worked at puppy stores in and around Las Vegas in late winter 2024, obtaining behind-the-scenes undercover video and photographs of dangerous conditions and sick dogs. The investigation revealed puppies with breathing problems, vomiting, bloody diarrhea and more.

Conditions at one store, Puppy Heaven, were so dangerous and several puppies were so ill that the investigator called humane law enforcement that same day. The investigator risked blowing their cover to report the sick dogs, including a gravely ill Havanese puppy being kept in the store's back room. The store manager had refused to take the puppy, named Cindy Lou, to a veterinarian. Animal control officers arrived at the store that night and required the manager to send Cindy Lou to a veterinary hospital, where she later died.

Cindy Lou's photograph remained on the store's social media site for more than a month after she died, and a researcher who called the store was told she had "been adopted." Records obtained by the HSUS show Cindy Lou died of liver failure without ever leaving the veterinary hospital.

Records obtained via the Freedom of Information Act show that Puppy Heaven's manager told humane law enforcement that she did not have the puppies routinely examined by a veterinarian, including upon arrival, which is required by [state law](#). The agency's report says the responding officer "explained to [redacted] she is required as the retailer acquiring puppies for sale to have them examined by a veterinarian and provided documentation from the vet that they are not sick/injured and otherwise healthy. [Redacted] stated she did not know that."

To the best of our knowledge, no penalties have been applied to the store for the lack of basic care that resulted in numerous animals suffering and at least one death. The HSUS Stop Puppy Mills team reached out to local humane law enforcement but has not received an update on any penalties as of the time of this report.

The law in Nevada regarding protection of puppies in pet stores is shockingly weak, with little or no protection for puppies suffering from



Cindy Lou, a Havanese puppy, suffered from lethargy and vomiting, but Puppy Heaven neglected to take her to a veterinarian for urgent care. The HSUS investigator called humane law enforcement, which then required the store to take Cindy Lou to a veterinarian, but she later died. Photo by the HSUS, 2024.



A Boston terrier at Puppy Heaven was not taken to a veterinarian for urgent care, despite showing signs of a severe allergic reaction. Photo by the HSUS, 2024

vomiting, diarrhea, lack of appetite, coughing, breathing difficulties, infections or most of the other ailments we witnessed during the investigation. Many other states with pet store laws require stores to obtain prompt treatment by a veterinarian for puppies with any significant illness or injury, or require pet stores to reimburse customers for veterinary bills if they sell a puppy who is clinically ill. But Nevada's law only prohibits stores from selling a puppy with an illness "that is terminal or requires immediate hospitalization or immediate surgical intervention." It expressly allows stores to sell animals with "internal or external parasites" and other non-terminal afflictions. The law results in puppies suffering from an array of painful ailments that are virtually ignored until they become severe enough to be life-threatening.



A Yorkshire terrier named Rolex had symptoms of severe hypoglycemia, and sometimes appeared almost lifeless, but Puppy Heaven did not rush him to a veterinarian for urgent care. They gave him a nutritional supplement instead. Photo by the HSUS 2024.

The puppy stores the investigator worked in were Puppy Heaven in Las Vegas, Petland in Henderson, and four Puppies for Less stores in Las Vegas, including their Cheyenne, Rancho, Sahara and Sky Pointe locations. In addition to concerns about sick puppies in many of the stores, HSUS researchers found that Petland, Puppies for Less and Puppy Heaven all purchased puppies from known puppy mills, including some that appeared in one or more of our [Horrible Hundred reports](#).

While all the stores visited had troubling conditions, Puppy Heaven's conditions were the most shocking. Puppies were kept in raised, open-top pens that many of them easily jumped or crawled out of, dropping a dangerous distance. This resulted in tiny puppies regularly hitting the hard floor from several feet off the ground, which the investigator caught on camera at least once. In addition, Puppy Heaven's staff admitted to the investigator that they routinely tried to treat sick puppies themselves with ad-hoc remedies instead of taking them to a veterinarian. Our investigator even witnessed oral syringes being washed and reused after staff medicated ill puppies. One employee verbally described another puppy who died after suffering from bloody diarrhea. Cindy Lou had suffered for days in deteriorating condition, lethargic and rarely eating. She was kept in a pen in the employee restroom until law enforcement intervened.



Puppies often climbed out of their unsafe cages at Puppy Heaven and dropped several feet to the hard floor. Photo by the HSUS, 2024.

Other shocking incidents caught on video, or otherwise documented by the investigator, included:

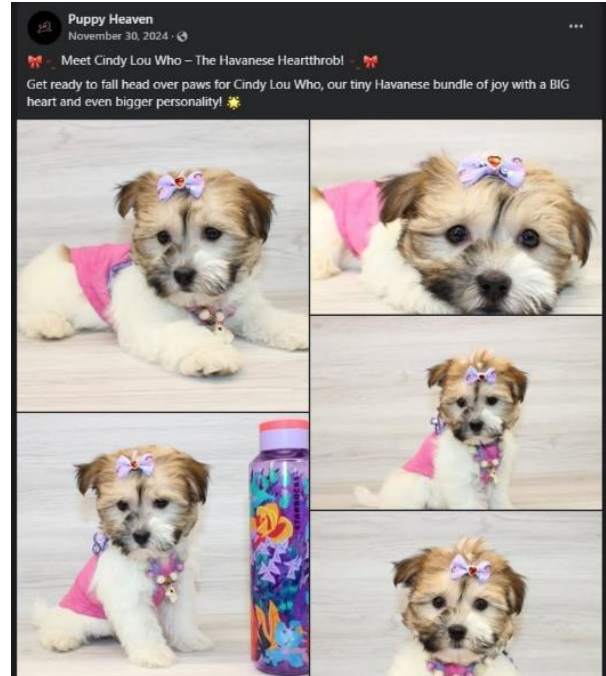
- **At Puppies for Less in Las Vegas (Cheyenne)**, a tiny Chihuahua named Drumstick was coughing, refusing to eat and had breathing issues. Instead of rushing him to a veterinarian, staff were instructed to treat Drumstick by placing him in a makeshift nebulizer in the back room. The “nebulizer” was made from a plastic storage tote with holes drilled in it, and was no bigger than a microwave oven. Drumstick was later moved to another Puppies for Less store, where our investigator learned he showed evidence of additional health issues; his ultimate fate is unknown.
- **At Puppies for Less in Las Vegas (Sahara)**, an employee trained the undercover investigator about forms that the store’s puppy buyers are required to sign that limit their ability to return sick puppies or obtain veterinary care reimbursement after buying a sick dog. The employee summarized the store’s attitude toward consumers, stating “your puppy WILL get sick, it WILL happen.” She added that if buyers decide to keep a terminally sick dog, the store pays “NO vet bills. Nothing, nothing.” The employee added that the store only takes back “terminally ill” puppies, and said that when a sick puppy is returned, he or she “usually gets put down” because they are too sick to treat affordably. She stated that if a customer wanted to return a puppy who was not severely ill, it was not permitted, adding that if a customer changed their mind about keeping a dog, “You made a wrong choice, we are NOT so sorry.” Another employee described store visitors who asked questions about puppy sources as “a—holes [...] asking stupid sh-t.”
- **At Puppy Heaven Las Vegas**, many pens as well as puppies were covered in fecal wastes, and the store had a strong odor. When the pens were cleaned with a bleach-and-water solution, the puppies were not removed from the pens, exposing them to the hazardous bleach. Puppies were also regularly found loose on the floor after escaping their open-topped enclosures and dropping a dangerous distance.



An ailing Chihuahua named Drumstick at Puppies for Less was placed in a makeshift nebulizer made from a plastic bin instead of being taken to a veterinarian for breathing issues. Photo by the HSUS, 2024.

- **At Puppy Heaven Las Vegas**, multiple puppies suffered from lack of appetite, lethargy and/or vomiting. When one tiny Yorkie puppy was found cold to the touch and unable to move, the puppy was given NutriCal, a nutritional supplement, rather than taken to a veterinarian for urgent care. A second Yorkie was seen limping that same day, and a Boston terrier had a very swollen face due to an apparent allergic reaction. None of the ailing puppies were taken to a veterinarian for urgent care.

- At **Puppy Heaven in Las Vegas**, a staff member said that the store sometimes purchased tiny puppies from Korea for resale in the store, which, if true, would be against [federal law](#), which prohibits importing puppies under 6 months of age for resale.
- At **Puppies for Less (Sky Pointe)**, one puppy had a hernia, another had a head tilt, two were coughing, and another had diarrhea. One puppy who had recently been sold had been diagnosed with parasites and kennel cough; the store refunded the buyer \$60, the store’s maximum contribution for medication costs. Although a veterinarian visited the store a few times, he stayed for only about 10 minutes, and only checked on the newly arrived dogs. The veterinarian did not even administer vaccines during the visit; they were given later by pet store staff.
- At **Puppies for Less (Sky Pointe and Sahara)**, some of the unpurchased, large-breed puppies had grown so large that they started to outgrow their crib-like enclosures. Some displayed destructive behavior due to boredom in the small, painted cribs where they were confined all day. They chewed on the walls and on their cribs and clamored for interaction and attention that the staff had no time to provide. Their anxious behavior due to the lack of proper housing and exercise seemed to make it even harder to appeal to buyers.
- At **Puppies for Less (Rancho)**, breeder information showed that puppies came from known puppy mills, including Jake Kruse in Iowa and Milton Lewis in Nebraska, both of whom were listed in our prior [Horrible Hundred reports](#) on problem puppy mills (Kruse in 2022 and Lewis in 2018) for filthy and unsafe housing conditions. State inspectors also noted egregious problems with sick and injured dogs on Milton Lewis’ property in 2017: One puppy had its leg torn off and another was found with puncture wounds on her back leg and a swollen eye after reportedly getting into a fight with other dogs. The Rancho store appears to be the hub store where most of the Puppies for Less dogs are delivered, later to be dispersed to the other branches.
- At **Petland Henderson**, the store had a strong odor, and the store reused oral syringes to medicate sick dogs and then washed them in the sink with other dirty dishes. A golden retriever had a bump or mass



More than a month after her death, photos of Cindy Lou were still online on Puppy Heaven’s Facebook page. A caller who inquired about her was told she had been “adopted.” Photo credit: Puppy Heaven, 2024.



A puppy mill owned by Christy Hillyard in Kansas sold to Puppies for Less and Puppy Heaven. Photo credit: the HSUS, 2023.

on his head, and several dogs had signs of respiratory illness, including a pug and a shih tzu puppy in small cages in an isolation room. The shih tzu seemed to be wheezing, with congestion-like noises coming from their chest. The manager said the store obtains 16-18 puppies a week, which is close to 1,000 puppies every year.

- At **Petland Henderson**, our research revealed the store received puppies from known puppy mills and puppy mill brokers in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma. The store’s manager told our investigator that the store pays about \$800 per puppy. The puppies are later sold for thousands of dollars, with prices varying depending on the breed. Prices over \$3,000 were common.



A puppy mill owned by Lou Ann Brown in Missouri sold to Puppies for Less. Photo credit: the HSUS, 2020.

The investigation proved what local animal advocates have been stating for years—pet stores are no place for puppies.

The HSUS and humane partners are currently working with Nevada legislators to bring forward a bill tentatively named “Cindy Lou’s Law,” which would end the sale of puppies in pet stores across Nevada. Eight other states have already passed laws to end the sale of puppies in pet stores, including Nevada’s neighbors, California and [Oregon](#). Humane pet store laws push consumers toward more [caring sources](#) of pets, including regulated animal shelters, reputable local rescues, and responsible small breeders.

Dogs in Nevada deserve a brighter future.