5

DOG SHORTAGES AND CANINE FREEDOM TRAINS

Dogs and cats come and go. During their stay—ten to fifteen years if we're fortunate, twenty years or more if we have a Siamese cat—they affect us in myriad ways. Powerful creatures, they change our lives, while we change theirs.

For pets, there are three primary scenarios, with corresponding emotional effects:

1. Pets enter our lives, stay for a meaningful period of time, and eventually pass away: the longer they stay, the more intense and lasting the benefits to the people who care for them, and to the animals themselves.

2. They enter our lives, but only briefly, before they run away, get lost, or are stolen. The uncertainty of such a loss, not knowing their fate—where and how they end up—is devastating. Sometimes, the shorter the stay, the deeper the emotional impact.

3. The star-crossed pets are the ones who do not find a loving home through rescue, adoption, or purchase. They languish for weeks or months, waiting for the kennel door to open, ready to leap into the arms of a welcoming family or individual. But it doesn't happen. We know how this drama ends—with dogs crammed into cages in pet shelters, desperate for homes that don't materialize. Eventually, these neglected animals are put to sleep, and a human being is denied a pet.

Fortunately, the third scenario is increasingly rare today, occurring only 5 percent of the time. If that number seems low to you, you're not alone. I routinely get quizzical looks at conferences when I share this fact with audiences. "But there are shelters everywhere," people say, "and they always seem to be filled with dogs. And you're saying only a small percentage of these dogs are euthanized? How is this possible?" It might seem like a magic trick, but it isn't. Instead, the solution is a surprising mix of mathematics and emotion (the key to this chapter), and a testament to the ingenuity of the American people and their passion for pets.

In my pet advocacy practice, it took me several years to fully comprehend the laws of canine supply and demand. Where do our dogs come from? How do we get them? How many are lost each year? And, do we have enough of them in America? I'll share some facts and figures with you to demonstrate what I've learned about these questions, but first I'll tell you a story about a single dog, in my childhood, and how he shaped my initial feelings on this subject.

It all started with Prince—not Prince the musician from Paisley Park, Minnesota, with his blistering guitar solos and soulful lyrics—but Prince the stray Collie who wandered into the front yard of my family's white frame house by the railroad tracks in McMinnville, Oregon, in 1956. I was three years old and he was the first dog I'd ever known: hazel eyes, thick white coat, a golden ruff, perhaps forty pounds, hungry and friendly. This was often how people in small-town America acquired dogs in the fifties, casually, without drama or planning. A dog strolled into the yard and your parents said, "Yes, you can keep him," or "No, we can't afford a dog." That was a parental decree a child couldn't challenge. Adopting a dog followed a simple rule: no collar, no questions (this was long before microchip implants). We were lucky that summer day in 1956. The bond between us was immediate, and though I had three siblings, I considered Prince *my* dog. Since I was only three years old, we could play and roughhouse together all day long, while the others were at school.

One day, Prince growled at the neighborhood milkman on his early-morning rounds, and the man broke a glass bottle over my dog's head, cutting him badly. The next day, our dad found Prince a safe home at "a farm outside town," where he wouldn't be "in harm's way." Or so we were told. My brothers and sister and I learned the truth some twenty-five years later. Dad had actually taken Prince to the local veterinarian, who gave him a lethal injection of the euthanasia drug pentobarbital. Prince went to sleep forever, after only two years with us. It was tough to hear this admission years later from Dad, and my sorrow for Prince

was profound, but as a child I was powerless to prevent the dog's death or to find a friendly, four-legged replacement. Though my parents both grew up on Nebraska farms with plenty of animals, the economics of maintaining a dog in a household with four children, later five, plus the hard rule that he must live outside, ruled out a substitute Collie.

In the fifties, dogs were an accessory to the American home, like a bicycle or a stepladder, consigned to a doghouse in the backyard, and kept if they stayed out of the way. They were not automatically replaced if they died. Supply and demand was unpredictable and tentative.

Cats, too, were a part of my life growing up. There were two kinds of cats in our neighborhood: feral cats that ran wild and caught plump, two-pound rats from the granary over the back fence, and pedigreed cats, like the three Persians that enjoyed a pampered existence with our neighbor Dorothy. Then, one day, a handsome black kitty with one white toe (I never forgot that feature) poked his head up through a loose floorboard in the mudroom. I named him Bosco; he hung around with me for a year, before wandering away, like many American pets before they became a national obsession. Pets were a tangent to our lives, not a necessity.

We aren't short of cat lovers in America. If you go by the numbers, we have slightly more pet cats than dogs—ninety-five million—and both animals are equally celebrated on social media. However, dogs are the face of Pet Nation in public venues by a wide margin. The relationships people have with dogs and cats are fundamentally distinct, and they manifest themselves differently. We spend less money

on cats, particularly with veterinarians, and rarely take them out in public. Cats are private, opaque, and independent. Temple Grandin has observed that cats are "hard to read because their facial expressions do not betray emotion the way dogs do." The old saying "Dogs have owners, cats have staff" is true. And they enter our lives in different ways.

Over the years, I began to recognize slowly, accidentally, almost by osmosis, the ways pets enter our lives, and the beneficial effect they can have on a family. The emotional windfall for people was obvious, but for most Americans the process of acquiring a pet was still serendipitous, not carefully planned. Today, understanding the multiple (and sometimes confounding) parts of the question "Where do American dogs come from?" is a fundamental part of my working life.

Fast-forward to 2010. I was working full-time on animal policy, shuttling between Portland and Washington, DC. I began to see glimmers of Pet Nation in my daughters' lives. I made an eleven-hour round trip from Portland to Boise—the new American family road trip—to find the perfect puppy for my youngest, Annelise, netting a "short, fast, smart, funny" Corgi named Holmes. Jillian was now almost a self-taught veterinarian, it seemed, passionately raising her Boxer, Dena, with that breed's special medical challenges. Caitlin had volunteered at shelters since she was ten, and her go-to escape from law school was the downtown Seattle Animal Shelter.* She described traffic jams on the block when the shelter posted pictures of a litter of puppies. By

midday Sunday, the dog kennels were nearly empty, and it was clear that things were changing.

I had been conditioned by the national media to believe that our shelters were overflowing with dogs. However, Caitlin's shelter experience opened my eyes. If a well-managed, local shelter in Seattle (the same was true at Oregon Humane Society in Portland) runs out of adoptable stock every week, was it an anomaly, or did shelters around the country face the same challenge? Three years later, after working on various pet-policy issues, I came to a startling conclusion: America has a dog shortage! I was astonished. If you think that all American shelters are filled with dogs that will never find homes, you're not alone. But you are wrong. America doesn't have enough dogs to meet demand, and the situation is getting worse. It is perhaps the single biggest problem for would-be dog owners in America. In this chapter, I will explain how this happened and why most people think the opposite is true. I'll also tease out the implications of this conundrum for American pet owners and breeders. Fortunately, there is a way to fix this problem, if we choose to do so.

Going to the Dogs (but Cats Count, Too): 2020

The shelter-dog adoption process today is much more streamlined. Every week, no later than Thursday, shelters post photos of dogs for adoption. By Monday morning, the cages are empty except for dogs with medical or behavioral issues. Yes, there are more elaborate methods of finding the

perfect dog. You could import a Sicilian Mastiff from a specialty breeder in Ukraine, as my brother's groomer did; or, like my colleague, rescue a Labrador puppy from Arkansas online, which, two weeks later, tumbled out of a Volkswagen van packed with dogs at a roadside delivery stop in Connecticut. All procurement methods are now fed by the voraciously viral phenomenon of digital media.

Visit the Dumb Friends League in Denver, one of America's leading animal shelters, and you'll understand some of the differences between the two species. Since 1910, this shelter has offered an impressive array of services: adoption (for dogs, cats, and horses); spay and neuter procedures; pet surrender; community education; and youth camps. If any shelter can place animals safely in loving homes, the Dumb Friends League can, with one of the highest placement rates for homeless pets in the country. In fiscal year 2018, 18,271 pets and 304 horses were adopted, reunited, or transferred to placement partners or animal control and welfare agencies from its single location.

Adoptable dogs are in short supply at the Dumb Friends League. The average length of stay is only eleven days, which includes the time required for medical treatment. In August 2019, Dumb Friends League CEO Apryl Steele told me that "only twenty to thirty dogs remain after most weekends, and those require medical care or behaviorally aren't ready to be adopted." But take a tour of the shelter and you will see plenty of *cats*. The numbers each year are declining, but they still outnumber dogs. That doesn't mean that Denver cat owners are abandoning their kitties at the Quebec Street facility in droves. It's because cats who have never been

spayed or neutered still run wild in America. Shelters like the Dumb Friends League try mightily to steer families toward cats, with some success, but it's a challenge keeping up with the numbers.

It is a constant problem for shelter managers: despite their efforts, shelters remain *shelters* for stray *cats*, who'd make delightful pets, versus low-inventory, quick-turning *retail shops* for *dogs*, except those that cannot be adopted. The average price differential between adopting out a dog or a cat (somewhere between $150 and $350 at many urban shelters) is a function of supply and demand.

Which brings us back to dogs.

For a decade, you've watched animal-welfare ads on television showing forlorn, malnourished dogs packed into shelters across the United States. You can now lower the volume during those commercials. America's dog shortage is a serious problem—there is a deficit of two million dogs per year, and growing. Ironically, a major reason for the public misconception about a surplus is the tens of millions of dollars that the ASPCA and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) spend each year on direct mail adoption initiatives and those heart-wrenching TV commercials. Remember the funereal ads with Sarah McLachlan singing "Angel," as the camera pans over cage after cage of dogs hungry for a home? "Every hour an animal is abused or beaten," the ASPCA ads intone, seeking $228 a year from each viewer, in part to address a dog surplus that no longer exists. Together, HSUS and the ASPCA raise more than $350 million each year through ads and other campaigns, to shape public opinion and to

advocate for animal-welfare issues relating to pets and farm animals.

The initial ad campaigns were a good idea. Fifteen years ago, when the campaign was launched, shelters were filled with dogs, and more than ten million dogs were euthanized annually. Thanks to countrywide spay-and-neuter programs, shelters now euthanize only 770,000 dogs each year, a 95 percent decrease. Most of the euthanasia cases have chronic behavioral or health conditions. Some credit must go to famed game-show host Bob Barker, who built the *Price Is Right* franchise from 1972 to 2007. A passionate animal rights advocate, Barker ended every show with the exhortation, "This is Bob Barker reminding you to help control the pet population. Have your pet spayed or neutered." Little did we know that our noble goal of slowing America's euthanasia trend would succeed so dramatically. We have improved the health of our dog population, but unwittingly depleted a precious resource: puppies.

Large shelters such as the North Shore Animal League on Long Island or the Nevada Humane Society in Reno have volunteers calling shelters around the country daily, searching for dogs to adopt and place. Is the public aware of this situation? Not yet. How many people have failed to find the right dog and then given up or adopted a cat? We don't know, because Pet Nation is only now waking up to this new reality.

I could fill this book with accounts of people desperate to find a new dog at a shelter, only to be told by an apologetic volunteer, "We ran out of dogs yesterday . . . hopefully we'll have some more next weekend, but get here early!" In New

York City's Union Square, a white van full of dogs just arrived from the South is the highlight of an adopt-a-thon on Saturdays—and half the dogs are spoken for even before the van arrives. By day's end, the cages are empty, and the van is back on the road to collect more dogs for the following weekend.

Faced with these challenges, do would-be pet owners give up, start googling breeders, or call Craigslist leads (without background checks)? The answer is *yes* to all of the above and more, because Americans, and millennials in particular, are determined to find the right dog, regardless of cost or difficulty. It doesn't help that 250 American cities and three states have banned the retail sale of dogs. It's a crisis we didn't know we had. So what do we do about it?

The Pet-Count Challenge

I am a policy adviser to the Pet Leadership Council, a group of senior executives across the pet industry, from veterinary associations and animal-welfare organizations to pharmaceutical companies, from pet stores to pet-food suppliers. Our mission is to promote humane pet-care services and access to family-friendly pets. In October 2014, the group's chairman invited me to make a presentation at a meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona. For months, I'd been developing a theory, and I decided this was my chance to test the industry's reaction. I loaded my slides with three points I thought would intrigue council members:

1. We can make educated guesses but actually don't have a clue about how many dogs are in America.
2. We don't know where our dogs come from.
3. We're guessing when it comes to the number of dogs America needs.

I knew this because my staff had spent six months rummaging through every pet website and Google link to track down data and had found nothing conclusive. Americans are obsessed with pets, and we enjoy a booming pet industry, yet no one on the nonprofit or for-profit side knew if our dog supply was adequate, or whether the existing procurement system was sustainable. It was puzzling. Several factors were responsible for the industry's collective myopia: the rapid zero-to-sixty growth of Pet Nation since 1998; the lack of protocols to share what little data existed; the patchwork of sources delivering dogs to the marketplace; and the glut of effective, but questionable, television advertising.

For twenty years, shelters large and small had been running effective spay-and-neuter campaigns, funded by pet companies and millions of compassionate donors. Yet we still didn't know the size or provenance of our dog population. We had built a massive and profitable network of providers and suppliers to service our pets, but no one knew if we had enough of them. Is there another $95 billion consumer industry that cannot answer these basic questions? The sporting-goods industry, for instance, is similar in size. In 2018, do you think Dick's Sporting Goods buyers knew how many basketballs they would need in 2019,

and where they would come from? Or do you think they crossed their fingers and prayed that delivery trucks would show up with the correct number of balls at exactly the right time of year?

A significant dog shortage has social and economic implications. If the demand for dogs continues to exceed the supply, dogs will become a luxury good. Veterinary visits and pet-product sales will then decline due to a puppy shortage. Jobs will be lost. Roughly 1.3 million Americans are employed in servicing Pet Nation, and a supply problem threatens every link in the chain, including would-be pet owners, breeders, shelter volunteers, pet-food manufacturers, toy vendors, veterinary hospitals, veterinary clinicians, national retailers, neighborhood pet shops, dog groomers, research scientists, pet therapists, and dog walkers, some of whom earn $200,000 per year. A 25 percent shortage of new dogs would harm people and businesses. Pets provide little benefit to society if only the rich can afford them, as it was in the Victorian era when companion dogs first became fashionable.

The emotional and financial consequences for Pet Nation would be grave. And when you consider the medical and sociological studies highlighted in chapter four that demonstrate the countless ways that pets help people and communities, such a shortage would be even more shortsighted.

Show Me the Numbers

My presentation to the Pet Leadership Council sparked a discussion on the magnitude of the problem. Was this a temporary trend, short-term and curable, or a systemic problem that had been percolating for years? Should the pet industry prepare to lay off 20 percent of staff? To make decisions, we needed dependable population data and an accurate national growth rate.

The Pet Leadership Council asked our team to find these answers with the help of professional survey and research organizations. Could we conduct a thorough, first-ever study of all animal shelters in America, to determine how many dogs land in shelters annually, and what happens to those dogs after they arrive? Various animal welfare and veterinary organizations had tried to gather this information, but the results were fragmentary and scattershot. Unlike Sweden or the Czech Republic, which have national dog registries, the United States has no such system. Nor does our government require shelters to report data to state or federal agencies. Run by volunteers, most shelters are skeletal operations with limited resources and equipment. We don't have reliable dog or cat ownership data, or a comprehensive national pet census.

For decades, we had all trusted the anecdotal evidence—myself, industry leaders, retailers, pet enthusiasts: "There are too many dogs in American shelters. Too many dogs are euthanized each year. Shelters mainly handle local strays. Breeders are producing the breeds and volume of dogs we need." The Pet Leadership Council directed us to do some research, and the data told a different story.

In early 2015, I enlisted the help of a veteran pollster, Bob Moore of Moore Information, and his analytics team in Portland, Oregon, to conduct a rigorous national phone survey of fifteen hundred households (the same sample size as a national presidential campaign poll). Their brief was to determine how many dogs were in American homes and where they came from. Once we knew these two chunks of data, by region, we could explore solutions. The study took nearly a year, but we got our numbers. They were a surprise.

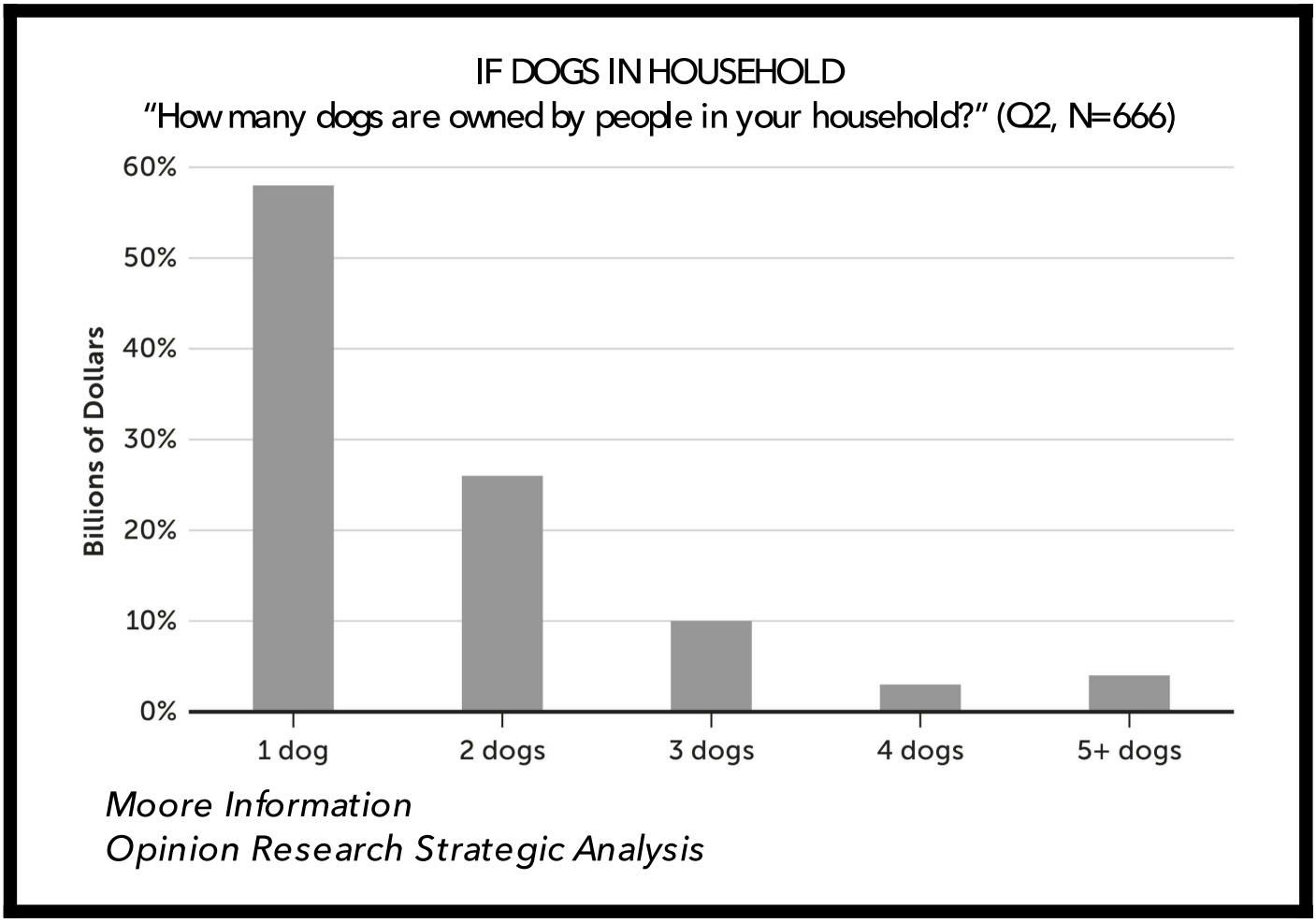
How Many Dogs Does America Have?

The Moore data revealed that dog ownership was broadly distributed in the United States, by region and by income. It also provided the first two pieces of the population puzzle: (1) the number of households with dogs; and (2) the number of dogs per household. Extrapolating this information to the number of US households, in 2015, gave us a national estimate of eighty-eight million dogs, generally more than the pet industry expected. Digging deeper into the survey, we learned that:

- **Nearly half of all households with dogs had more than one dog.** Dogs are social creatures with a pack mentality and can suffer psychological damage if left home alone for long periods. In writing her book *The Hidden Life of Dogs*, anthropologist Elizabeth Marshall Thomas followed a pack of dogs around a neighborhood, studied them, and concluded that dogs who live in the

company of other dogs "know they are understood" and are more "calm and pragmatic." Of the 44 percent of American households with a dog, 26 percent had two dogs, 10 percent had three dogs, and 7 percent had four or more. Raising two dogs together from a young age is a good way to socialize them—not only in their behavior with other dogs, but with people. This data supports the thesis that dogs can play a central role in family life and raise its overall level of happiness.

Number of Dogs in Household



- **Red states have more dogs than blue states.** The Northeast and the West Coast (both at 39 percent) lagged behind the rest of the country in dog ownership versus households in the Midwest (46 percent) and Rocky Mountain states (52 percent). Does the higher concentration of farms in the Midwest, which can accommodate dogs more easily than city apartments, distort the regional data? Do blue states skew *cat* because of urban density and the prevalence of apartments? Is there a correlation between pet ownership and the voting habits of Americans?

Dog Ownership: Key Subgroups–1

	Yes	NA	No	Net yes
All Residents	44%	1%	55%	-11%
Region				
Pacific	39%	–	61%	-22%
Mountain/Plains	52%	–	48%	+4%
North Central	46%	–	54%	-8%
South	44%	1%	56%	-12%
Northeast	39%	2%	59%	-20%
Gender				
Men	43%	1%	56%	-13%
Women	46%	*	54%	-8%

Age				
18–34	45%	1%	54%	-9%
35–44	44$	–	56%	-12%
45–54	55%	–	45%	+10%
55–64	45%	1%	54%	-9%
65+	37%	1%	62%	-25%

Moore Information
Opinion Research Strategic Analysis
*Less than one-half of 1 percent

- **Dogs are *not* a luxury item only for high-income Americans.** Income variation had relatively little effect on ownership, with the largest group—at 56 percent ownership—falling into the $50,000 to $99,000 income range, considered America's middle class. It is logical that the explosion of dogs in Pet Nation is driven by the country's largest demographic, but it's worth noting that the lowest income group—earning less than $30,000 a year, at 43 percent ownership—is only three percentage points behind the highest income group (earning $100,000 plus a year), representing 46 percent ownership.

Dog Ownership: Key Subgroups–2

	Yes	NA	No	Net yes

All Residents	44%	1%	55%	-11%
Ethnicity				
Caucasians	49%	*	51%	-2%
Total non-Caucasians	37%	1%	62%	-25%
African Americans	32%	2%	66%	-34%
Hispanics	42%	–	58%	-16%
Others	36%	*	64%	-28%
Kids under 18 in household?				
Yes	53%	1%	47%	+6%
No	41%	1%	58%	-17%
Income				
Less than $30K	43%	*	57%	-14%
$30K–49K	41%	1%	59%	-18%
$50K–99K	56%	–	44%	+12%
$100K or more	46%	*	53%	-7%

Moore Information
Opinion Research Strategic Analysis
*Less than one-half of 1 percent

Knowing how many dogs we had in America, we could determine how many *more* we needed each year. Based on an average canine life span of eleven years (American

Veterinary Medical Association longevity averages, including all breeds and sizes), we calculated that it would take approximately 8.3 million dogs to replenish the dog population each year, while factoring in the human population growth rate (since not all pet owners immediately replace their lost or deceased dog). This calculation led to two questions: (1) Does the supply of dogs from disparate sources add up to 8.3 million; and (2) where do our dogs come from?

SHELTERS AND CANINE FREEDOM TRAINS

From Moore Information data, we knew how many dogs we had (eighty-eight million), and we could calculate how many we needed (8.3 million annually). But we didn't know what percentage of the 8.3 million target figure shelters could provide. If 50 percent or less, then we had to make some hard choices about the future of commercial breeding, the only scalable American-made solution. Ultimately, we need puppies. Some do end up in shelters, but where do we find the balance? If the supply is inadequate, do we counsel American pet owners that the only way to replace their favorite dog when she passes away is to pay a hefty premium for a new one?

To answer these questions, I traveled to Starkville, Mississippi, in the fall of 2015, in the heart of cotton country, the home of Mississippi State University. Though well-known for college baseball stars and raucous cowbells

at SEC football games, Mississippi State is also a leading research university with a student body the same size as the town of 25,000. Mississippi State was founded in 1862 as a land-grant university for "agricultural, horticultural, and mechanical studies," and "other scientific activities . . ." That was why I was visiting its excellent veterinary college. There, I met a talented pair of scientists, shelter veterinarian Kimberly Woodruff and epidemiologist David Smith.

The Mississippi State College of Veterinary Medicine has earned a national reputation in shelter medicine, a worthy field of study in a state whose rural communities are starved for resources. Mississippi shelters have an abundance of stray dogs but little funding to manage or care for them. With the Bulldogs as the university mascot, Mississippi State seemed like the perfect place to begin a dog survey.

As an epidemiologist, Dr. Smith could extract the information we needed from a representative national sampling of shelters. Dr. Woodruff was more hands-on, running an innovative shelter medicine program for veterinary students who drive mobile surgery units around rural Mississippi (where many dogs run wild), and help shelters by spaying and neutering thousands of dogs each year. Outfitted with three surgery beds per rig, it is an impressive program, bringing expert veterinary services directly to local shelters. Without Dr. Woodruff's pioneering work, the shelters could not spay or neuter the dogs, and the local dog population would remain out of control. Proud of the program's accomplishments, Dr. Woodruff explains, "We

teach students how to be real veterinarians by serving communities without resources but full of volunteers eager to make a difference. I've lived in west Tennessee and Mississippi most of my life, and it still impresses me what we are able to accomplish with a handful of students."

And what happens to those fine Mississippi pups after being spayed or neutered? I soon learned what makes the American shelter/adoption wheel turn. The dogs travel north in air-conditioned vans to shelters in Minneapolis, Chicago, and other Northern cities, to be adopted out to families. That's right, "canine freedom trains" run from south to north all across America: Mississippi to Minnesota, Tennessee to New York, Alabama to New Jersey, Los Angeles to Portland. When you visit a Boston or Newark or San Francisco shelter, you rarely see local strays. This is an efficient, well-ordered network, a marketplace in which underfunded and understaffed Southern shelters are motivated to spay and neuter, shipping quality dogs to Northern shelters to satisfy local demand.

Southern donor shelters collaborate with their Northern counterparts to ensure medical and behavioral quality before the dogs head north. The receiving shelters specify the kinds of dogs they want, or don't want (often Chihuahuas and Pit Bulls). These "migrant" dogs represent most breeds, but the lion's share are mixed breeds (a.k.a. "mutts"). They range in age from six-week-old puppies to fourteen-year-old Retrievers with arthritic hips. Northern demand seems never-ending, and it's heartening to see how many families passionately want dogs, no matter the breed, age, or physical condition of the animal.

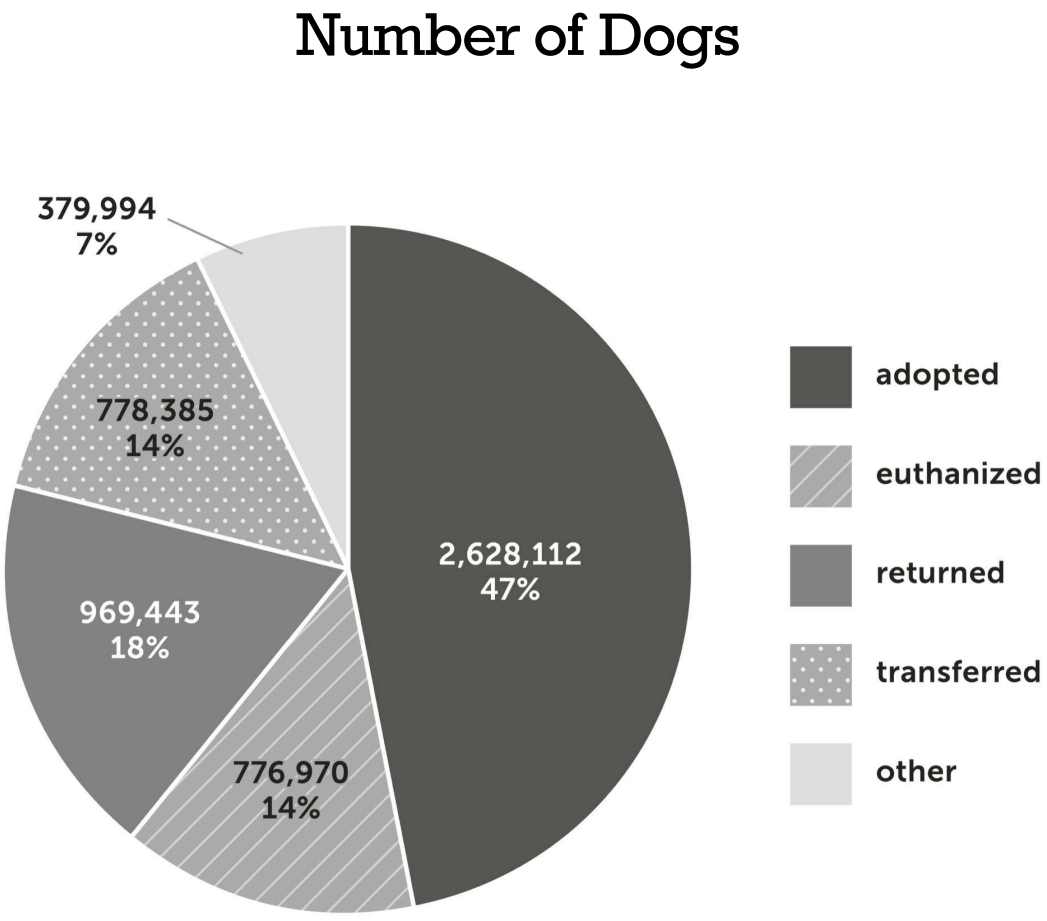
Though this sourcing matrix might seem improvised or stopgap, it works. Certain geographic regions (South, Southwest, lower Midwest) are slower to adopt spay-and-neuter practices common elsewhere, and a high volume of their dogs land in shelters. Other regions (the Northeast, upper Midwest, the Pacific Northwest, Northern California) need dogs for families and will pay for spayed or neutered dogs, plus transport. The caravans save the dogs from euthanasia. Shelters in the lower half of the country gain income and peace of mind that their dogs find good homes, while Northern shelters satisfy demand and earn income from adoption fees. Everyone wins.

This is the topsy-turvy world of animal shelters that we commissioned the Mississippi State team to study. We asked them to conduct a comprehensive national survey of all shelters in America (more than seven thousand in total) to answer five questions:

1. How many dogs enter shelters in one year?
2. How many dogs are adopted out?
3. How many dogs are transferred to other shelters or rescue groups?
4. How many dogs are returned to owners?
5. How many dogs are euthanized?

Once we knew these figures, we could build a model to determine where Americans could find new dogs. With a catch-and-release method used by wildlife researchers to estimate the number of animals in a specific region, Dr. Woodruff and Dr. Smith answered our questions. Here are

the findings in 2015 for the 7,076 shelters in the United States that my team had identified.



Of the 8.3 million dogs needed each year, shelters adopt out 2.6 million. That is slightly more than 25 percent of the target 8.3 million, but it leaves a gap of 5.7 million dogs that shelters cannot supply. We know from separate industry sources that local breeders, American Kennel Club (AKC) breeders, the Internet, and large-scale breeders add another 3.4 million dogs to the pool, taking us to 6 million. That's still 2.3 million dogs short. Shelters are only part of the solution, which leaves commercial breeders, foreign dogs, or other undefined sources to fill the breach.

Several years ago, my friend Alexis was working on her computer in New York, browsing the available animals at online shelters. Her eyes fell on a photo of an emaciated English Springer Spaniel with matted hair and chewing gum stuck to his tail. He was slightly cross-eyed but had wonderful chestnut-colored markings. Without telling her husband, she hurried to the 110th Street kill shelter to give him a closer look. He had been microchipped (with no response from his owner), and though the English Springer Spaniel rescue group was on its way to inspect him, his fate was uncertain. Alexis adopted Bailey on the spot.

This anecdote reminds readers that the dog marketplace isn't dominated by large commercial breeders. Pets come from multiple ad hoc sources, which makes the acquisition process more difficult to analyze, predict, and quantify.

Where Shelter Dogs Go

The Mississippi State shelter study discovered that during the year (2015):

1. 5.5 million dogs entered shelters.
2. 2.6 million dogs were adopted.
3. 970,000 dogs were returned to owners.
4. 778,000 dogs were transferred to other shelters or rescue groups.
5. 777,000 dogs were euthanized.

Professors Woodruff and Smith presented their analysis at the North American Veterinary Community conference

in Orlando, Florida, on February 7, 2017. The next day, this research became national news—*The Washington Post* ran a lead story with the headline: "Does America Have Enough Dogs for All the People Who Want One?" For the first time ever, the mainstream media had covered this issue, and it drew attention from policymakers to industry experts to existing and would-be pet owners.

For years, internal pressures had routinely forced shelters to euthanize dogs to make room for the next pack. Budget, staff, and space limitations were the constricting factors. Some no-kill shelters never euthanize, even when dogs are too sick or behaviorally challenged to be adopted. However, those shelters are the minority, and they usually limit their dog intake or have more space than many nonprofit shelters. Once the dog-loving public learned about adoption alternatives, particularly in Northern metropolitan markets, the situation began to change. As supply caught up with demand, euthanasia rates declined.

Though ten million dogs were euthanized annually in the eighties and nineties, we euthanized only 777,000 in 2015 and transferred approximately that same number to other shelters or rescues. This wholesale shift is still difficult for many people and animal advocates to believe, but our spay-and-neuter campaigns have been wildly effective. Perhaps too effective.

Americans now face a dilemma we couldn't have imagined twenty years ago when three of every four dogs in shelters were put down each year because no one adopted them and shelters ran out of space or resources. Though Americans need 8.3 million dogs each year, shelters can

only supply 2.6 million. Americans want dogs now, and Pet Nation has a dog shortage to address.

THE BATTLE ROYALE OVER COMMERCIAL BREEDING AND PUPPY MILLS

The *Washington Post* story that brought these findings to the general public was written by Kim Kavin. She is the author of an excellent book, *The Dog Merchants*, which explores the mysteries and economics of puppy production in America. In her book, she divides dog breeders into two categories: commercial (big) and hobby (small). Commercial breeders raise puppies in large-scale operations; hobby breeders are much smaller, producing one to three litters each year at home. Hobby breeders are not inspected by federal agents. They produce pet dogs and show dogs, so their dogs are more expensive than accidental breeders and commercial breeders. Responsible hobby breeders generally produce no more than three to four litters with a single female before she retires as a pet. Veterinary science differs on how many litters a healthy female should produce in lifetime, but commercial breeders often cap this at six.

As with any profession, size is not a predictable measure of quality. Small law firms beat the international heavyweights more often than you think. In *The Dog Merchants*, Kim Kavin quotes Elizabeth Brinkley, a small-scale breeder and legislative liaison. “I’ve been in kennels with a hundred dogs,” Brinkley said, “and they’re fantastic

and I've been in hobby breeder kennels that I wouldn't let my dogs near. It's not about numbers. It's about care . . . without commercial breeders, there wouldn't be enough of the popular purebred and cross-bred puppies . . . to satisfy consumer demand." Ms. Brinkley understood that commercial breeders are essential if we want to provide the quantity of puppies needed. Not every observer agrees with her, as we shall see.

In 2006, HSUS launched a tactical offensive against puppy mills, a wickedly effective epithet they applied to all commercial dog breeders. In a public relations and political broadside comprising advertising, direct mail, lobbying, and articles in the mainstream media, HSUS accused commercial breeders of animal abuse and slipshod care. The name "puppy mills" stuck, and large breeders have been on the defensive ever since. Once a profession or individual is branded "abusive" or "profiteering," it is difficult to shake the image. Though an obvious solution to our dog shortage is to increase commercial production, the puppy mill stand-off undermines that idea.

Commercial breeders keep to themselves, in part because of political pressure from activist groups. They operate out of the spotlight in rural areas of America, such as Arkansas and Missouri. Their facilities are often located behind tall hedgerows, making public viewing difficult, if not impossible. Though opponents claim that they "must have something to hide," commercial breeders argue that it's done to protect the dogs from threats outside their premises. They maintain that dog breeding is no different than raising cattle or chickens, albeit with unique humane

standards and practices. Many are carefully run operations, with regular access to professional veterinarians, AKC registration, DNA testing, mandatory microchip implants, hygienic facilities, and plenty of room for their dogs to exercise. Unfortunately, the HSUS campaign indiscriminately threw every commercial breeder under the puppy mill bus.

Breeders and the two large activist groups, HSUS and ASPCA, have an ongoing adversarial relationship. If there is one area of common ground, it's that each group considers the other to be mercenary. Breeders say that HSUS and ASPCA demonize them to promote fundraising campaigns to aid shelter dogs, and that these organizations falsely claim that 25 percent of shelter dogs are pure breeds. (An Arizona State University study estimates that it is only 5 percent.)

HSUS and ASPCA, on the other hand, argue that breeders operate purely for financial gain, to the detriment of dog health and behavior. They claim that most commercial breeding operations are unsafe and unsanitary for animals, with minimal veterinary care and small, confining cages. They contend that it is unethical to operate large-scale breeding facilities for dogs, like cattle yards or chicken farms. They assert that no one should be allowed to breed more than a handful of female dogs ("bitches" is the technical term), regardless of the conditions and level of care.

AMISH BREEDERS

A fascinating but little-known chapter in the puppy mill story is the role of the Amish. The Amish are traditionalist Christian fellowships living in isolated rural communities sprinkled across Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and other Midwestern states, like the one in the Harrison Ford film *Witness*. They emigrated to America in the early eighteenth century and are known for simple living, plain dress, and aversion to modern technology. They are successful farmers, drive horse-drawn carriages instead of cars, and use animals in their farmwork, so breeding dogs is a natural business for them.

Amish dog breeders are some of the largest and most powerful breeders in America. Activists claim that 20 percent of all puppy mills in the United States are Amish-run. One opposition group called Bailing Out Benji has been especially vigilant in its research. It focused on one county within each of the three aforementioned states, whose concentration of puppy mills warranted state or federal government citations.

Bailing Out Benji contends that 98 percent of the offenders have Amish surnames, which doesn't prove that all Amish breeders run puppy mills. It's probably no coincidence that Amish leaders in southern Indiana have reached out to Purdue University's Center for Animal Welfare Science, in a public manner, to help improve Amish breeding standards, institute best practices across all Amish farms, particularly with respect to dog socialization and exercise, and educate the public that Amish breeders aren't bad.

But how do we increase the number of puppies in the United States if commercial breeders can't earn a living? If conditions are clean, safe, and humane, with compassionate, modern veterinary care and room for exercise, the size of a facility shouldn't matter. Is it necessarily different than cattle ranching? If humane breeding standards are established *and* rigorously enforced (undercutting the activist attacks), then why wouldn't pet owners welcome healthy dogs from large-scale breeders?

HSUS claims that the United States has at least ten thousand puppy mills, including what they call the Horrible Hundred, a collection of breeding operations

concentrated in the four worst-offending states: Missouri, Ohio, Iowa, and Pennsylvania. They have exposed shocking examples of neglect that frequently air on the evening news. One example is the breeder in Randolph County, Arkansas, who, in 2015, was charged with abusing forty-six dogs, mainly Great Pyrenees, by giving them limited access to food or water, no outdoor exercise privileges, and no protection from the cold ("icicles on their whiskers"). The facility also had crates of female dogs stacked one atop the other, and piles of feces and urine on the floor that dogs couldn't avoid. This falls squarely within the HSUS definition of a puppy mill: "A dog breeding operation, offering dogs for monetary compensation, in which the physical, psychological and/or behavioral needs of all or some of the dogs are not being consistently fulfilled due to inadequate housing, shelter, staffing, nutrition, socialization, sanitation, exercise, veterinary care and/or inappropriate breeding."

No one defends puppy mills, but when an alleged puppy mill operator doesn't allow the press or third-party groups inside facilities to verify conditions, they invite suspicion of animal cruelty. Transparency and a system of enforceable oversight are vital to ensure ethical treatment of the animals. At the same time, it doesn't necessarily follow that a large breeding operation is deplorable (or, by definition, more poorly run than a small breeding facility). Good, responsible breeders should be able to breed as many dogs as they can manage at a verifiably high level of care.

There has been some progress recently in the puppy mill saga. A few states, including Ohio, have begun to regulate

breeders with enforceable standards to address egregious behavior. This has shuttered some breeders, but both sides concede that there is still a long way to go. There are many ways for unethical breeders to market puppies, the Internet being the most difficult to track. Regulations with enforcement tools and "good" breeder buy-in (like the coffee industry's fair-trade initiative, which changed consumer behavior) could solve this problem, but, to date, no state has achieved an effective balance of standards with inspection.

ANIMAL WELFARE ACT

"USDA Animal Care, a unit within the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, administers the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). This federal law establishes requirements concerning the transportation, sale, and handling of certain animals and includes restrictions on the importation of live dogs for purposes of resale, prohibitions on animal fighting ventures, and provisions intended to prevent the theft of personal pets. Regulations established under the AWA set standards for the humane care and treatment for certain animals that are exhibited to the public, sold for use as pets, used in research, or transported commercially. Facilities using regulated animals for regulated purposes must provide their animals with adequate housing, sanitation, nutrition, water and veterinary care, and they must protect their animals from extreme weather and temperatures."

—*USDA website*

USDA inspectors are required to conduct routine, unannounced inspections of all facilities licensed or registered under the AWA. Inspectors are classified as veterinary medical officers (VMOs) or animal care inspectors (ACIs). All VMOs have graduated from a veterinary medical college, and many have been private-practice veterinarians prior to joining USDA Animal Care. Inspectors pursue regulatory enforcement actions or closure if a facility does not meet standards or correct violations on a timely basis, if they choose to do so.

A related conflict involves pet stores. Activist groups have convinced 250 cities, twenty-two counties, and the states of California, Maryland, and Ohio that most pet stores sell puppies from puppy mills. Their solution has been to stop the retail sale of puppies altogether, believing that this will eliminate puppy mills. Pet stores counter with evidence that their puppies do not come from puppy mills and that activists have painted the picture with an unfairly broad brush. Many city councils have sided with the activists and now limit pet stores to selling dogs from shelters. Given the scarcity of shelter dogs, this isn't a realistic population approach, nor will it satisfy demand for purebred puppies. If substandard breeders can successfully sell puppies on the Internet, pet stores aren't the problem. Unfortunately, no person or government agency knows where most Internet dog sales originate, or which Internet breeders are humane.

A major regulatory challenge involves our federal government, specifically, the Department of Agriculture's Center for Animal Welfare division. It regulates animal breeders, including anyone selling dogs across state lines ("interstate commerce"), and the importation of dogs for retail sale. HSUS, ASPCA, and other activist groups have battled the USDA for years over allegedly weak standards and the lax enforcement of laws (only a few operations have been closed or refused licenses by the USDA, see sidebar). A controversial USDA decision in 2017, prompted by a lawsuit, to keep the names of federally regulated dealers confidential and to remove thousands of documents detailing animal-welfare violations from the USDA website has inflamed the fight. These documents included the inspection reports for

every commercial animal facility in the United States for decades.

The USDA cited privacy concerns, applying their logic to both private and public companies. However, many experts don't believe that this legal argument should apply to public companies. Dan Ashe, head of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the former director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, commented that the USDA's removal of records is "not in the interest of credible, legitimate animal care facilities. It erodes public confidence, because when people see something like that, they're inclined to think that the government is trying to shield something from their view."

As in many areas of public life, the federal government has the tools but appears to lack the will and/or the resources to address this problem. There is no end in sight to this drama.

Dial Back Spay-and-Neuter Programs

Juvenile dogs are treated better today than at any time in canine history, so is it time to slow down the rate of spays and neuters? It may be heresy to disagree with Bob Barker, but we have to ask the question in *Pet Nation*. If we don't have enough puppies, then America has a dog shortage—it is basic arithmetic. Would it make sense to scale back spays and neuters, and encourage more puppies to be born in the United States? It sounds simple, but the politics are complex, and finding the mechanism or resolve to rein in an

extraordinarily successful, twenty-year spay/neuter juggernaut fueled by a constant flow of emotional TV advertising will not be easy.

Four arguments challenge the widespread view that all puppies must be spayed or neutered, and they are raised by serious thought leaders:

1. We no longer have a dog-surplus crisis; instead, we face a chronic shortage. That's been the focus of this chapter, and it forces the question of why we continue to spay and neuter at the furious pace of the last two decades. If the overarching rationale for spay-and-neuter campaigns no longer exists, due to dramatic changes and reduction in euthanasia rates over the past twenty years, then why wouldn't Pet Nation reconsider the matter?

2. Researchers have produced credible findings that spay and neuter procedures, particularly neuters of large dogs, pose major health risks due to the loss of access to hormones. These discoveries should be addressed, as they undermine the folk wisdom that spays and neuters are "good for dogs." Here's a short list to date of serious health risks:
    a. Increased risks of joint disease, cancer, and obesity (Dr. Benjamin Hart, UC Davis study)
    b. Hip dysplasia, knee ligament damage, mast cell tumors, cancer of blood cell walls, lymphatic cancer (Dr. Benjamin Hart, UC Davis Golden Retriever study)

c. Obesity prevalence (Dr. Missy Simpson, Morris Animal Foundation)

3. A spay or neuter changes a dog's behavior, and not always for the better. Doesn't Pet Nation have a moral obligation to evaluate these behavioral factors before maintaining our policy of automatically spaying or neutering every young puppy?

4. Sweden and Norway are sophisticated societies with long histories of advanced animal welfare and a high percentage of dog owners. Spays and neuters are the exception there, not the rule. Alexandra Horowitz's excellent commentary in a 2019 article in the *New York Times*, "Dogs Are Not Here for Our Convenience," explores this issue and observes that Scandinavian pet owners manage sexually intact dogs—in public and private—with seemingly few problems, challenging the notion that America will run amok with humping dogs and canine sexual encounters if we relax our national policy of mandatory spay and neuters of puppies. Keep in mind that two-thirds of states have laws on the books requiring that shelter dogs be "altered" before adoption.

The spay/neuter process is so automatic that abstaining is a cultural taboo, and dogs who are not fixed may not be allowed to board in doggy daycares or play in dog parks. While this was not the original intent of ASPCA in launching a nationwide campaign, it has become ASPCA's

official creed. Dr. Horowitz highlights that neutering is convenient, and this explains much of its popularity. Pet owners do not want to deal with non-fixed animals and are offended by humping behavior, which is natural for a dog. Horowitz put it bluntly: "We are implying that dogs should be asexual, in body and mind."

Alternative procedures such as tubal ligation or injectable sterilant are available but uncommon in the United States. Another challenge is political pressure to lower the minimum age of spaying or neutering puppies to four months, which is now a common shelter practice. Many studies in recent years suggest that there are hidden health costs to spaying or neutering your pets if they are too young. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) says in a guide for veterinarians, "There is no single recommendation that would be appropriate for all dogs." Shelter policies do not show any signs of changing in the near future, but the maturation of Pet Nation and a growing shortage of dogs causes your author to predict that the debate is only beginning.

The challenge is to establish the right formula or balance of spay/neuter efforts and humane commercial breeding operations. If we aggressively spay and neuter every puppy we can find, and shut down commercial breeding, then America is left with no choice but to rely upon unregulated foreign breeders or accept that puppies will become a luxury good.

LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES GET INTO THE GAME: COWS, HORSES, PUPPIES, KITTENS?

Another way to tackle our dwindling supply of dogs is to take advantage of one of the United States' greatest public resources—our land-grant universities.* In 1862, Vermont congressman Justin Morrill introduced a bill to provide grants to states for the establishment of colleges specializing in agriculture and the mechanical arts. Iowa was the first state to establish a land-grant university, and we now have seventy-six such institutions, including Ohio State, Purdue, and Mississippi State, which conducted our national shelter survey. These universities have animal science programs that research the breeding of many species, from cows and chickens to llamas and *beavers*. The breeding of beavers—hardly an American obsession—is being studied in American universities, so why not study the 185 million cats and dogs living in American homes, applying the same skills and experience that animate Dr. Woodruff and Dr. Smith at Mississippi State?

If Americans decry the conditions at commercial dog-breeding farms, why not motivate land-grant universities (with a century of expertise in animal science) to help? They could develop standards for humane breeding, a subject only Purdue is exploring at the moment. They could teach laypeople to breed dogs safely and profitably, something no school is currently doing. And they could work with commercial breeders to improve the conditions and success rate of their breeding operations. Such a collaboration could improve the reputation of commercial breeders and benefit

land-grant colleges. University extension agents and 4-H clubs could also teach people to be good breeders. If two of three dog owners consider their dog their "best friend," then dog breeding should be an honorable profession. We don't hide cattle or sheep farms from the general public, so let's open dog-breeding facilities to the public. It's time to trim the hedgerows at commercial breeders.

Professional breeders are now exploring a standards-based approach, led by the commercial firm PuppySpot. Thus far, these efforts don't extend to any land-grant universities beyond Purdue. They should consider a campaign to open breeding farms for public and educational viewing. If the public could visit breeders, where they would see and understand humane ways to raise puppies and to care for their mothers, then more people would consider studying dog breeding at respected land-grant colleges. Considering that Americans spend $11 billion annually to acquire dogs, there is a financial logic in responsible, professional dog breeding.

Learn a Lesson from Zoos

American zoos could teach the pet-breeding industry a strategic lesson in transparency. Zoos once looked and felt like jails—concrete cells with metal bars. The Portland Zoo I visited as a child had "inmates," from lions to tigers to bears to monkeys. Zoos had an image problem, and animal liberation groups attacked them regularly. Eventually, they woke up. They improved their animal habitats, opened their

doors to children, parents, and educators, and welcomed the media behind the scenes, showing veterinarians delivering baby pandas. They took educational outreach and conservation projects into local communities. Zoos said, "Come on in. We have nothing to hide," and, today, are thriving attractions, a favorite field trip for elementary students and adults. The Tisch Children's Zoo in Central Park, a New York City landmark, has over one million visitors each year. Dog breeders could do the same, with land-grant universities leading the way.

DISNEY WORLD

Disney World has a long-standing commitment to humane animal care, through Animal Kingdom and other programs. Sensing the public's curiosity about animal care, it placed a glass viewing wall in front of its veterinary clinic, allowing guests to watch veterinarians treat wild animals. Colorado State University dean Mark Stetter, formerly chief veterinarian at Disney World, said: "Nothing we did was so powerful as those glass walls to let guests know how seriously we took the care of our animals, from the tiniest bird's wing to a hippopotamus needing heart surgery."

YOUR PASSPORT, PLEASE

We live in a globalized world, with high levels of human migration between countries. But foreign pets cross borders, too, in many different ways. When people move to the United States, for instance, they often bring along their pets. Some

people import exotic pets to sell, like the snakes and reptiles you find in Florida pet stores. (Fifteen-feet Burmese pythons occasionally end up in suburban swimming pools or the Everglades, where they are now an established breeding population.) Commercial breeders ship a relatively small number of dogs through legal entry points to rescue groups and pet retailers. Some dogs straggle across the border on their own four legs, or are smuggled in without documentation or customs clearance from Mexico, Ireland, the Philippines, and Eastern Europe. Though it is illegal to import puppies under the age of four months, people do so.

We don't know exactly how many illegal dogs arrive here each year. US Customs keeps track of dogs entering America legally, and the official number is normally in the twenty thousand to thirty thousand range. These are often the pets of students or people on extended work or travel visas, and not packs of dogs for commercial sale. In 2008, US Customs recorded 28,000 official entries, but they estimated that another *280,000* dogs entered illegally. Since the goal of illegal entry is to elude capture, estimates of the number of dogs entering the United States illegally (and the identity of the smuggling parties) differ widely.

However, on August 26, 2019, the US Department of Agriculture adopted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's estimate that "approximately 1.06 million dogs enter the United States each year, including 700,000 arriving at airports and 360,000 arriving at land border ports of entry within Canada and Mexico." The announcement confirmed that less than 1 percent of these

dogs are properly screened for medical conditions and diseases.

The illegal importation of dogs is a serious problem. These dogs can carry a disease and safety risk. In 2017, Denver veterinarians discussed with me a spike in the number of new dogs carrying diseases of foreign origin, such as parvo. The press has reported several incidents of unhealthy dogs spreading disease to existing shelter dogs. A highly publicized public investigation of importation through the Los Angeles airport uncovered quantities of unvaccinated puppies arriving with fake records. Public-health veterinarians examined the dogs and determined that they were six to eight weeks old.

As long as American breeders cannot meet demand, foreign sources will bring puppies across our border any way they can, and they will skirt the law to do so. One solution might be to ease importation restrictions so that we can funnel all incoming dogs (or as many as possible) through legal entry points where they could receive legitimate inspection and be properly registered. This would reduce the number of illegal dogs entering the country and the attendant risks. Currently, no government or nonprofit group is investing time or resources to address this problem.

Do illegal foreign dogs reduce our annual dog shortage? The lack of data makes it impossible to know, but the CDC estimates in 2019 suggest that perhaps half the shortage already is being met through foreign sources. Critics argue that rescue groups pursue dogs from foreign sources to boost their revenue. If this claim is accurate, the practice endangers public safety, leading to cases of rabies and other

diseases. The rescue groups respond that they are saving the lives of dogs at risk, while meeting consumer demand for specific breeds in the United States. A news investigation in 2017 led to the temporary suspension of one group for rescuing imports from Puerto Rico. In a statement, the president of National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA) Patti Strand wrote: "There is a lot of money in this new kind of rescue. These groups move dogs from just about any place that they can get them." Strand emphasized the risks to American communities from dogs carrying canine brucellosis, rabies, and other vector-borne diseases.

We could initiate discussions with the governments of countries sending dogs to America, to establish standards for the humane breeding of puppies, proper veterinary care, and record-keeping. The suspect nations include Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Turkey, Colombia, the Philippines, Romania, and several Central Asian countries. These would not be easy conversations, considering the questionable state of their current animal welfare practices. It is hard enough to establish standards here in the United States. If our borders remain porous, without surveillance and disease prevention, the foreign importation of dogs will continue to resemble the Wild West.

Where Does This Leave Things?

We have a dog shortage, and if we don't address it, dogs will become a luxury item. This is a complex problem, and it will require a combination of approaches to solve it. The most

efficient way to get more dogs is to breed more dogs, and the most effective way to breed more dogs is through large, commercial dog breeding. But commercial dog breeding is hamstrung by political and public relations issues, many of the industry's own making. If Americans trusted a certification process that demonstrated that dogs are treated well, bred humanely, receive regular veterinary care, and are inspected transparently, then commercial breeders could thrive.

We've seen the success of such initiatives before in the retail coffee industry, which was once condemned for the quality of its product, environmental practices, and the treatment of farmworkers abroad. The industry successfully changed its reputation with a certification program for the country of origin for coffee beans. Retail chains and growers cooperated because it made good business sense. American consumers were more than happy to pay more (a significant premium)* to know that their coffee was ethically sourced.

Requiring and enforcing a certification program for breeders might make dogs more expensive at first. Would Americans pay more for healthier, well-bred puppies? They do now, and they will, so an initial pricing bump should not be an issue. Shelters could play a valuable role in this effort to produce more puppies and generate more income in the process. If American breeders produce enough puppies to meet demand, the price of both foreign imports and domestic retail prices should eventually decline, satisfying complementary consumer desires: more good dogs at even lower prices. Land-grant universities could accelerate this process. The USDA's Animal Welfare service might even

participate, since one of their stated priorities is to regulate the safe and healthy production of animals, no matter the species.

The solution to the dog shortage is relatively simple in concept, but the political environment surrounding it is charged and the number of moving parts daunting. Perhaps it's no surprise that your lawyer/lobbyist author suggests that political compromise and legislation could be the solution. We need to: (1) strike a fair deal on certification among all interests (private, public, and nonprofits); (2) enforce strict breeding standards based upon such an agreement; (3) improve border control; (4) let the market take care of the rest; and (5) insist upon transparency. Breeders, distributors, pet-shop owners, shelters, and Internet vendors must be open about their practices. Otherwise, animal activists like ASPCA and HSUS and the public will never be satisfied, and rightly so. A "Humanely Bred" tag for every new dog could be a safety label that Americans come to trust, and pave the way to that magic 8.3 million number.