

- My name is Lorie Chortyk. I am the general manager of community relations for the BC SPCA and I am here this afternoon to speak on behalf of the BC SPCA, but also as a member of this community. I have lived in Richmond for the past 23 years and I care deeply about what happens in my city and the example that we offer to other municipalities.
- I urge council to support a ban on the sale of dogs and puppies in pet stores.
- Every year, the BC SPCA rescues countless dogs who are subjected to horrific, sickening cruelty in B.C. puppy mills. These dogs are forced to endure unspeakable abuse and neglect in order to put money in the pockets of those who exploit them. Sick and neglected dogs churn out sick and ill-bred puppies, so that those who view them simply as a commodity can profit. The puppies bred in these gruesome facilities infiltrate our communities through puppy brokers – the middle man who deals directly with the puppy mill and finds outlets in our communities to sell the animals. As if this wasn't bad enough, many of these puppies, who are often purchased on impulse, are then abandoned or surrendered to animal shelters when the new owners discover the puppies are sick, or when the novelty wears off, and taxpayers and charities are then left to pay the price to provide veterinary care, rehabilitation and to try and find new homes for them. We can point to many cases where puppies were purchased at pet stores and almost immediately brought to the SPCA. This cycle of puppy mill abuse and homelessness is allowed to occur because there are currently NO checks and balances in place to ensure that the puppy brokers who access dogs from puppy mills do not sell animals in our communities.
- The last time we were before council, we sat and listened as representatives from local pet stores assured you that they only dealt with reputable breeders who were known to them - that they personally inspected the homes where puppies were bred and raised; that they made sure appropriate education and matching was done; that they had "cooling off" periods to ensure that individuals did not buy an animal as an impulse purchase and that they strongly advocated for the dogs to be spayed and neutered to avoid adding to the tragedy of pet overpopulation .
- A few days after that meeting, some of our staff and volunteers visited these very same Richmond stores, as members of the public, asking about dogs for sale. In each case our volunteers were encouraged to purchase the dogs immediately and take them home that very day without proper preparation or a time to consider the responsibilities they were taking on. When these individuals said they didn't want to spay or neuter the puppy they were told that was just fine, that there was no reason they had to do that. In fact Pet Habitat's own website talks about how new owners have full breeding rights and right beside this statement on their website is a logo from PIJAC.
- The most disturbing thing that occurred during these visits was when our people asked for contact information for the breeder so that they could find out more about the puppy's health and genetics. In one store they were given a name of an individual who a staff member later admitted was a puppy broker. This is in spite of the store initially claiming to the volunteer that they did not deal with brokers, only reputable breeders whose facilities they inspected. Telephone requests to the store manager for the broker's contact information were ignored. The volunteer then left her personal phone number and asked to have it passed along to the broker, also without results or a return phone call. The store obviously didn't want our volunteer to have any contact with the source of the puppy she was enquiring about.

- In another Richmond pet store, our volunteer was given the names of the supposed sire and dam and the kennel they were raised in, but no contact information. Neither a website nor a phone number could be found to match the information and our volunteer, again, could not make contact with any breeder or broker.
- Our ongoing experience with pet stores who sell live animals for profit is that they will say one thing publicly, but the reality is very, very different. We have countless examples of pet stores who refused to supply information about their breeders or who were evasive when questioned. This secrecy suggests that there are no safeguards in place to stop the flow of puppy mill dogs into our local stores.
- Many years ago, before I began working for the BC SPCA and before I knew about the link between pet stores and puppy mills, my own parents purchased two puppies from a Pet Habitat store. Within days both puppies were at the vet's office with serious medical issues which the vet confirmed were the result of poor breeding and neglect. While Pet Habitat said they would take the puppies back and euthanize them (an offer we declined) they refused to supply information about where the dogs were bred, and in fact the puppies they sold us as siblings turned out to be different breeds entirely. One of the puppies died a few days later despite medical intervention and the second dog lived but had continued medical issues throughout his life. The SPCA hears these kinds of pet store experiences all the time and when people demand "what can you do about this?" we tell people the only thing we can do is to encourage our municipal governments to protect local citizens and hold businesses accountable in our communities.
- The BC SPCA is currently working with newspaper classified sections and online sites to try and prevent the sale of puppy mill dogs through these sources. But only this council can prevent puppy brokers from accessing and infiltrating our community through pet stores. Richmond Council has shown commendable leadership in addressing a number of animal welfare issues in recent years. Banning the sale of puppies would add to our legacy as a community that refuses to condone animal suffering.
- The BC SPCA understands that Richmond Council wants to support its local businesses. We agree with this – we are not anti-business. But it is abundantly clear that the pet industry does not need to sell live animals in order to be profitable. We have two very successful business models right here in Richmond who sell pet supplies – Bosley's Pet Food Plus and Tisols.
- Richmond pet businesses can be successful without sacrificing innocent animals on the altar of profit. As a member of this community and on behalf of the BC SPCA, I urge mayor and council to continue building Richmond's reputation as a humane and responsible city and to support a ban of the sale of puppies in pet stores.