

INVESTIGATING YOUR LOCAL PET STORE

Do **NOT** patronize stores that sell live animals. When you buy from a pet store, you are simply making room for the next litter of puppies to be brought in. Puppy mills provide the “inventory” for retail pet store operations. If your local pet store does sell live animals, here’s what you should look for when investigating conditions in the store. If you find unhealthy conditions, report them to Minnesota Federated Humane Society 612-866-8663.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

The overall impression of the store should be pleasant and clean.

Check general sanitation; notice signs of cockroach infestations, rodent droppings on the floor, etc. There should be no obvious odor in the store (rodents do give off an ammonia smell, but it shouldn’t be too strong).

Proper heating, cooling and ventilation should be provided.

The overall temperature in the store should be about 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Reptiles and amphibians should have separate heat sources.

Cages and aquariums should NEVER be placed in direct/constant sunlight.

Animals should look healthy and well fed.

Be alert for signs of poor health – listlessness, diarrhea, emaciation, dull coats/skin, runny eyes or noses, sneezing (normal with iguanas), or labored breathing.

Sick animals should be isolated from other animals and the public.

The store should have an isolation room where animals infected with a contagious disease or suspected of being infected are segregated from other animals in the store.

Juvenile animals should be separated from adult animals other than their mothers.

Different species of animals should not be housed together unless compatible.

Desert-dwelling species shouldn’t be housed with tropical species, etc.

Aggressive or cannibalistic animals should be housed individually.

Predator and prey animals should be housed out of sight of each other.

If not intended to be breeding stock, animals (especially rodents) of breeding age should be housed according to sex.

Accidental breeding WILL result if they aren’t.

Dogs or cats under the age of 8 weeks or guinea pigs, hamsters or rabbits under the age of 4 weeks should NOT be up for sale.

ENCLOSURES

Cages should be made of safe materials.

No harmful metals, rust or sharp or protruding parts that could injure an animal. No paint should be chipping.

Enclosures should be structurally sound and allow for cleaning.

Enclosure surfaces should be constructed of a material that is water-resistant and can be cleaned / sanitized.

Enclosure floors should be constructed to prevent injury to the animals’ feet and legs.

Wire flooring should be of an adequate gauge to prevent sagging and the mesh should be small enough to prevent feet from passing through. A resting board should be provided over half the cage - something like a clean floor mat or another similar device that allows the animal to rest off the wire flooring.

Enclosures should be clean.

Enclosures should be free of old feces, long dead prey or food items, and any other obviously old soilings. The cages should allow for the animal to stay clean and dry (as appropriate for the species).

All cages should be provided with lighting.

Appropriate day/night cycles should be maintained for each species. Reptiles and birds need access to UVB lighting.



FOOD & WATER

Fresh water should be provided in clean water bowls/bottles at all times.

Look for algae or scum in water bowls, empty water containers, or animals having difficulty drinking from water bottles.

Food suitable for the specific species should be available at all times.

Open food and water containers should be easily accessible and located to minimize contamination by excreta.

Animal food and water containers should be kept clean and sanitary.

Opened bags of pet food should be stored in waterproof, closed containers.

Check for feed bags contaminated by rodents or insects.

ENCLOSURES (cont.)

Enclosures should be provided with a variety of toys and climbing or shelter structures to satisfy behavioral characteristics of different species.

Natural or commercially produced shelters and safe toys should be provided to reduce stress. Arboreal animal enclosures should have climbing materials such as ladders or tree limbs.

Adequate space should be provided, appropriate to the age, size, weight and species of the animal.

Animals should be able to experience normal body movements without having to make contact with the sides or top of the enclosure.

Cedar shavings, lava rocks, or corncobs should not be used as litter materials.

CLEANING

Occupied enclosures and display cases should be cleaned as often as necessary

Sanitary conditions can be maintained by washing all surfaces with effective cleaning and sanitizing agents and methods. Animals should be removed from the enclosures when water or any chemical solution is used in cleaning.

Animal and food wastes, used bedding, debris, and any other organic wastes should be removed from enclosures daily.

Food and water containers and all other utensils should be cleaned and sanitized using heat or a chemical sanitizing solution.

A dishwasher that uses heat or chemical sanitizing solution may suffice. These containers should be cleaned and sanitized daily or more often if necessary to maintain sanitary conditions.



**Animal Rights Coalition
P.O. Box 8750
Minneapolis, MN 55408
612-822-6161
www.animalrightscoalition.com**