

Auction Houses of Horror



Because of the large number of puppy mills in Missouri and surrounding states, Missouri has become home to two auction services that specialize in the sale of breeding dogs. Dog auction sites serve as distribution centers for commercial dog breeders and as clearing houses for puppy mill dogs. These dog auctions, in too many instances, are also being used as dumping grounds for old, ailing, or non-productive breeding dogs. In an effort to squeeze every last penny out of their investments in breeding dogs, puppy millers prey on the sympathy of dog rescue organizations and often put their infirm dogs up for auction knowing that some rescues will buy their old and sick dogs rather than allow them to remain in the system or be taken back home to be killed.

Although there are federal and state laws to protect dogs in puppy mills from such abuse, **little is being done to stop the marketing and trading of sick and infirm animals at dog auctions.** This year alone, dozens of sick dogs have been auctioned off at Missouri's two dog auction sites. This includes dogs with Parvo, Giardia, debilitating dental disease and severe ear infections as well as a host of other illnesses. Many of the dogs with severe dental disease require multiple extractions; one dog that was sold at a recent Missouri auction had to have 18 teeth extracted. In addition, this poor animal had a urinary tract infection and was positive for Giardia. This past March, numerous dogs were sold at *Southwest Auction Service* in Wheaton, Missouri with Parvovirus, ear infections, and serious dental disease. One dog was being auctioned off while

she was still in active labor. The Parvovirus is of grave concern because it is so contagious, and all of the other dogs at the auction were exposed to the Parvo-positive dogs. On the same day, a standard poodle was transported to the auction in the trunk of a car.



Severely Matted Dog with Multiple Skin Infections Sold at Auction

The auction services purport that each dog that is auctioned receives a physical examination by a veterinarian before being offered for sale. Such examinations, however, tend to be cursory at best and fail to comply with basic hygienic practices. At the March auction – where the dogs with Parvovirus were auctioned off – more than 100 dogs wound up being placed on the auction table FOLLOWING the dogs with diarrhea (who were later confirmed to have Parvovirus). Yet there was no disinfecting of this table between dog placements during the course of the entire day. None of the employees, including the veterinarian examiner, were observed to be wearing gloves or were seen to disinfect or wash their hands between the handling of all of the dogs throughout the day. The best evidence of the cursory nature of the examinations is the significant number of reports that the Alliance has received from purchasers of ill dogs that were auctioned off at *Southwest Auction Service*.



Dog in Respiratory Distress and in Heart Failure Sold at Missouri Auction

Across the state in Cabool is another dog auction known as *Heartland Sales*. Veterinary examinations appear to be no more thorough and to be even less hygienic at *Heartland* than at *Southwest*. The veterinarian employed by *Heartland*, when performing vaccinations, has been observed to use the same needle over and over again on multiple dogs. After one obviously ill dog with purulent discharge was vaccinated, the same needle was used to vaccinate multiple other dogs, including an entire litter of puppies. This same veterinarian handled hundreds of dogs without using exam gloves and without sanitizing her hands at any point. One dog that was brought out and placed on the table was visibly sick with drooling, nasal discharge, and discharge from both eyes and had a thin body with hair loss and scabs. The veterinarian continued to examine other dogs without sanitizing the exam table and without ever washing her hands. Shockingly, the veterinarian approved this animal to be sold at auction.

Of particular concern are these inadequate physical examinations conducted on the animals by the auctioneers' veterinarians. The auction veterinarians are providing only cursory inspections at best and have never been observed to be checking dogs' vital signs or temperatures; they also failed to note other health-related criteria such as gum color, diarrhea, and vomiting. And of course the auctioneers report almost all animals to be healthy when the time comes for them to be sold regardless of any findings that had been made during the cursory examinations.



Many Dogs Sold at Auction Have Rotting Teeth and Infected Ears

At this same auction last summer, a rescue organization reported that two dogs had been left together in a cage on the night before the auction and that the next day each of the dogs had multiple bloody wounds due to fighting. In spite of those bloody wounds, both dogs were placed at auction; however, no one bid on them because of the seriousness of the wounds and the obvious need for veterinary care. A rescue eventually agreed to take them in order to see to it that the animals would receive veterinary care. *Astonishingly, even though this took place in front of two state inspectors, no one was cited for not having kept the two dogs separated in compatible groups as required by law and for allowing injured dogs to be put up for sale without any veterinary treatment for their wounds.* There were three other dogs that were fighting within a cage; they were spared serious injuries only because a rescue intervened to separate them.

At *Southwest Auction*, the federally licensed auction sells prescription medications directly to the dog breeders without veterinarian authorization as required by federal law. On at least one occasion, the auction was even observed to be selling expired prescription medications to dog breeders while within the presence of a USDA inspector.

What is most disconcerting is the fact that the vast majority of the sickly and infirm dogs being sold at auction originate from USDA and Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA) licensed breeders. The Alliance has filed multiple complaints regarding the sale of sick dogs at Missouri auctions with

both USDA and MDA and just recently discussed our concerns directly with the Western Regional Director for USDA. **We have made it abundantly clear that anyone who disposes of infirm animals at auction should be prosecuted, as should the auction operators who accept sick animals for sale at auction.**

You can be assured that the Alliance will be closely monitoring conditions at future Missouri auctions and we will continue to work vigorously to improve conditions and halt the ongoing selling of terribly sick animals.