

*Devon Krusko*

- *Field Services and Community Programs Manager for RedRover, a national animal welfare non-profit organization*
- *Former Animal Care Manager, Humane Society of Chittenden County*
- *Animal Control officer*
- *Certified Professional Dog Trainer- Knowledge Assessed (CPDT-KA) via the CCPDT (Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers)*
- *Certified Family Dog Mediator (FDM)*
- *Whelping foster, whelped and raised numerous litters of puppies from the sheltering system*

*My name is Devon Krusko and I am writing to support H. 567 because it will ensure that we don't see an influx of puppy-selling pet stores in our state.*

*The puppies available for purchase at puppy-selling pet stores are often born, housed, and raised in inhumane conditions. Though often advertised by a puppy-selling pet store as being raised by loving families, these stores are purchasing puppies from puppy mills, also known as commercial breeding facilities. They are advertised as AKC registered and/or USDA inspected; however, and unfortunately, this does not indicate a humane facility. Rather, violations continue year after year often with no repercussions or improvements to the care of the animals.*

*In these facilities, dogs are repeatedly bred without consideration for their age, health conditions, and temperament. They lack human interaction, veterinary care, appropriate housing, and their basic needs (exercise, activity, enrichment) are not met. Dogs are often housed in stacked cages that they never leave, living on wire floors on top of each other, or outside in unregulated temperatures. Some do not have enough room to stand up or turn around, and federal law only requires cages be six inches larger than the dog. Other issues include not having drainage for waste, a lack of food and water, and crowded conditions that lead to disease. I have personally worked with dogs from these situations, many exhibiting major health concerns. A few examples include congenital eye and hip defects, high parasite infections, serious eye, ear, or skin conditions, and a myriad of issues that stem from over breeding, some leading to death, including a dog that had been in active labor for days unnoticed.*

*Other examples include puppies with severe, untreated infections from their tails being cut with fingernail clippers, as well as dogs with behavioral challenges, including compulsive disorders like excessive spinning.*

*From a behavior view, puppy-selling pet stores are selling puppies that have not received the vital care, enrichment, and socialization required for them to grow into a safe and well-adjusted adult dog in the home and community. This is a safety concern. Research suggests that prenatal stress on a mother dog affects the behavior, physiology and brain development of her puppies. This can lead to behavioral issues such as resource guarding, stranger-danger, reactivity, and aggression. These issues are a combination of genetics and the environment the*

*puppies are raised in, and unsuspecting families purchasing these puppies often end up navigating complex behavior challenges. As such, many are surrendered to local shelters, or rehomed numerous times, with some outcomes ending in behavioral euthanasia for safety reasons.*

*Animal shelters across the country are facing a crisis, with too many animals and not enough adopters. New England is not immune from this, and we have not solved our homeless pet challenges. Transport programs (bringing dogs from high volume shelters to New England for adoption) have drastically changed and in some cases, including at our local shelter, have completely stopped due to a lack of adopters and an incredibly long wait list for our local community to surrender their dogs. Length of stay (how long an animal is in a shelter) has increased, with highly adoptable dogs waiting significantly longer for adoption. Euthanasia across the country is up 64% from 2021, which includes puppies and highly adoptable healthy dogs. On Adopt a Pet, which is just one of many online adoption/rehoming platforms, there are over 160,000 dogs and puppies in need of a home. Within 100 miles of Burlington, the same site lists 500+ dogs and puppies in need of a home.*

*Allowing puppy-selling pet stores in Vermont will contribute to the number of homeless pets in our community, and sends a clear message that the state supports the cycle of a cruel and inhumane practice. We can and must do better for both pets and people.*