

TOO MANY PUPPIES

Every day, thousands of dogs are purchased from pet stores or over the internet, supplied by breeders, referred to as puppy mills, more interested in making a profit than in providing quality animals or producing puppies in a safe and caring environment. There may be as many as 10,000 of these puppy mills operating across this country.

Every day, thousands of dogs are euthanized in shelters across the United States, partly due to medical or behavioral issues, but to a greater degree, simply because there is no room. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) estimates 6-8 million dogs and cats enter shelters each year, and 50% of those are euthanized.

Last Friday, in a highly-touted expose', the Oprah Winfrey Show highlighted an investigation into the world of puppy mills. The report was shocking. It's true, what is going on is not illegal, however it is inhumane and unconscionable. Investigative reporter Lisa Ling accompanied Bill Smith, founder of Main Line Animal Rescue, to several puppy mill sites. Smith, whose hundreds of rescued abused, unwanted or abandoned animals come from puppy mills in Pennsylvania, rehabilitates them and then adopts to families.

In Smith's experience, most pet shop owners deny their puppies come from puppy mills. An undercover investigation by the HSUS, released December 11, 2007, confirmed this industry-wide deceptive practice. At a high-end pet store in Los Angeles, which claims to set the standard for the pet store industry, wealthy clients, including many celebrities, were deliberately mislead about the origins of the pets that had been acquired from Midwest puppy mills.

Smith confirms that dogs in puppy mills live in deplorable conditions. Their only purpose is to produce puppies. Older females and males not needed for breeding are disposed of. The anonymous remain-



der live their lives producing litter after litter in overcrowded cages often exposed to the elements, with minimal or no vet care, no toys or attention. When released, they don't even know how to walk on the ground. Some have their vocal chords damaged to keep them from barking. Many are filthy, coats overgrown and caked with feces and urine.

Last year the HSUS conducted a five-month investigation into more than 1,000 dog breeding establishments that sell commercially in Virginia. Only 16 had been registered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. At one horrible facility, the HSUS was assisted by local officials in removing nearly 1,000 dogs and puppies. While some unlicensed breeders were operating illegally, there is no federal or state law requiring registration, a major deficiency in the legislative process.

During the Oprah show, the camera visited a typical big city shelter, the Fort Worth Animal Shelter, where more than 40 dogs are put down each day out of the average of 50 brought in. In an attempt to quell these desperate odds, this summer the Ft. Worth Shelter will offer free spaying or neutering to all animals adopted from their facility.

While puppy mills flood the eagerly awaiting market with their puppies, often inbred with health or behavioral problems, there is a larger issue of pet overpopulation in general. Spaying or neutering your pet is such a simple step in the right direction. In many areas, there are free or low-cost spay/neuter clinics. Oprah's own veterinarian, Dr. Shelly Rubin, emphasizes that spaying or neutering is one of the best things you can do for your pet's health, improving behavior and greatly reducing the risk of prostate, testicular or breast cancers.

The primary action we can take to combat the prevalence of puppy mills is to refuse to buy an animal from a pet store. I have had customers complain that it is too difficult to get a new pet when you are in the mood if you live on Nantucket. I certainly can understand that, and it is so easy to succumb to an

adorable puppy in the mall pet store. However, if you buy it, it will only be replaced by another puppy from a puppy mill.

Try not to be impetuous. If you are thinking about getting a puppy, first check your local shelter or nearby shelters for available pets, or put your name on their wish list. A number of adoption services are available online, such as www.petfinder.com, associated with the Animal Planet television series, which posts dogs available from shelters all across the country, including Nantucket. Groups such as Main Line Animal Rescue, Lange Foundation and the country's largest no-kill shelter, Best Friends Animal Society, are excellent resources with websites.

If you know you want a specific breed, look into the breed's rescue group. If you just have to have a new puppy of a particular breed, carefully research the breeder. A reputable breeder will be more concerned about their puppy going to a proper home than about making the sale. They will screen you as thoroughly as you screen them. Always ask to see the breeding premises and the parents, or at least the mother. You should also obtain an adoption contract that spells out the breeder's responsibilities, health guarantees and return policies.

Finally, state and federal legislators need to be informed that the inhumane treatment of dogs in puppy mills cannot be condoned. We need legislation to assure that our companion animals are bred in healthy conditions. Contact your legislator or join the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) Advocacy Brigade, www.aspc.org, for up-to-date information on current legislative action. ■

Jan Jaeger is owner of Geronimo's, Ltd., Nantucket's pet supply and gift shop, and is a member of DWAA and CWA (Dog and Cat Writer's Associations of America). Her pets at home are Junior, a Chesapeake Bay Retriever and one cat. At the shop are the cats, Messrs. Fish and Chips, Flower bunny, Willie guinea pig and two budgies. Send e-mail to jan@geronimos.com.

Media
you can
Trust
books
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movies

Outcast" by Sadie Jones is such a novel. Set in 1957, the novel takes place in Waterford, a suburban town outside London. However, it could be anyplace because Jones does such a good job bringing the novel to life that you set the stage as the place that lives in your own imagination. Lewis Aldridge is just out of prison and coming home to the family who no longer wants him. A boy who is an incongruity of emotions, Lewis is trying to figure out his place in the world, and in the lives of his father and stepmother. The mother who is now deceased is a major part of Lewis's life, and the guilt that drives his anger. Deeply rich characters, a plot that is many layered yet smooth _ there's nothing like the first time!

— Lucretia Voigt,
Mitchell's Book Corner

Nantucket Bookworks
25 Broad Street, 228-4000

"Shantaram"
by Gregory David Roberts

A great thing about bookselling is that recommendations are a two-way street. Some of my favorite books have been pressed upon me by customers, as is the case with this wonderful novel. "Shantaram" is a sweeping epic tale based on the author's actual experiences as an escaped convict liv-



ing in Bombay, where he worked for the Mafia and formed a free clinic in the slums. (!) The opening sentence is a doozy: "It took me a long time and most of the world to learn what I know about love and fate and the choices we make, but the heart of it came to me in an instant, while I was chained to a wall and being tortured." And off we go. The saga encompasses so much _ love, war, the meaning of life... but I don't want to give it all away. Grab this 900 page mind-expander and discover its rewards for yourself. It's an exciting page-turner and wholly satisfying story of redemption

—Wendy Hudson,
Nantucket Bookworks

Nantucket Atheneum
1 India Street, 228-1110

"Pigs Love Potatoes"
by Anika Denise
illustrated by Christopher Denise

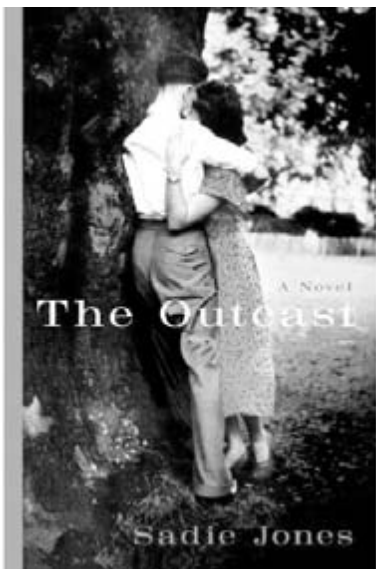


Husband-wife team Anika and Christopher Denise have created a counting book using the story of a family of pigs preparing for a potato supper. Christopher Denise, renowned illustrator of the "The Great Redwall Feast," "A Redwall Winter's Tale" and "The Redwall Cookbook," offers expertly drawn illustrations with a sense of family fun to accompany Anika's simple, but clever, rhyming text in her first picture book. A treat for toddlers practicing their counting, and for those fond of piggies in any picture book setting. ■

—Maggie Head,
Nantucket Atheneum

Mitchell's Book Corner
54 Main Street, 228-1080

"The Outcast"
by Sadie Jones



Debut novels are fascinating to me. The writers are new, raw and not jaded by the publishing industry. They write for the art not for an audience their publisher has set out. "The