

Heartland Pets

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Heartland Pets is thankful for the opportunity to share our views about the very important issue of animal welfare. Our pet store, Heartland Pets, is a full line retail pet store in Erie, Pennsylvania. We have been located in the Erie community since May 1993. Our mission is to provide Erie and surrounding communities with a clean, family-friendly environment with knowledgeable staff who provide our customers with the best in pet options! Our dog breed selection is extensive and many find that we are the only place available to them for specific breeds. We specialize in fostering that perfect human-animal bond. Our goal is not just supplying a customer with a pet, but we aim to make sure that all their pets' needs are met. From the type of animal, breed of dog, or species of fish, it is vital that our customers have all the options available to them.

Heartland Pets takes pride in everything we do. We are not a business that takes what we do lightly. We are not selling clothing, cars, or computers, but living creatures. We have a strong sense of compassion and understanding of what it takes to care for all the animals in our store and it begins long before the animal even reaches our store. All of our breeders and suppliers are considered exemplary. The owner has traveled to many of the breeders' residences, investigated their background, seen their property, and interviewed them at length regarding their breeding practices. The breeders we choose are very transparent. They follow all legal guidelines, are inspected regularly, and understand that they, too, are the first line of defense against bad breeding, animal cruelty, and the basic knowledge that it all begins with healthy, happy animals who will become a lifelong joy and friend to their owners.

Once an animal arrives, we follow a strict protocol for entry into our store. A bath, an examination, worming and vaccine protocol, and all proper paperwork is filed. Our goal is to be as transparent as possible to our customers. All breeder information, vaccination/medication reports, parent information and warranty forms are included in every puppy folder. Our staff is trained to guide the customer through all of this information so they can be just as informed as we are. Our warranties are extensive. The sense of relief a customer has after buying from us is evident. They know that their purchase is protected. Again, these are living creatures.

We are a licensed retail store that is regulated, monitored and guided by several organizations including the PA Dog Warden, Department of Agriculture, PA Department of Health, the Humane Society and our veterinarians from Erie Animal Hospital. We work closely with the vets on staff to ensure all the animals are properly cared for while in our care. We pass along to our customers a certificate for a complementary health exam at Erie Animal Hospital within ten days of purchase to instill the importance of continued veterinary care for their new pet. We have passed every one of our scheduled and surprise inspections with 100% perfect scores!

Pet Sale Bans

The thought of a pet sale ban in Pennsylvania would have a severe impact in several ways. Where would consumers go to get a pet? Where would they go for the knowledge and supplies our staff could provide? What would happen to our small business and our employees? The impact a ban like this could have on consumers may not even compare to the impact it could have on the quality of the animals themselves.

Banning pet sales from a brick and mortar store often leads consumers to un reputable, possibly non-humane backyard breeders with no recourse. Certainly there is the possibility that consumers will be forced to find dogs, especially, from breeders that do not adhere to any standards of care or State and Federal regulations. Many may not supply the consumer with vital and necessary information such as parentage, health history and warranties. It could also lead to the problematic issue of internet sales and scams. Most consumers would much prefer to see their new puppy in person, to have that bonding experience

first. To buy a puppy sight unseen does not make sense to most of the customers with whom we spoke, and those that have admitted to being scammed by an internet site has more than doubled in the past year. Many require a deposit up front, travel fees, etc. to only find out there is no puppy available at all and no recourse for those to get any money back. In what conditions would the animal be shipped/delivered? And if they were lucky enough to buy a pet online and receive it in perfect condition, where would they go for supplies, training information or the knowledge a pet store staffer could give them?

Bans on pet sales can also negatively affect our local businesses and the community. There are a small number of shelters and rescues in Erie County. Many only have a few adult dogs, dogs with behavioral issues, animals that are unsuited as a family pet, and rarely any puppies at all. As of October 13, 2020, our local Humane Society had only six available dogs, all adults, five of which were pit bull or pit bull mixes. Most of these shelters are virtually empty leaving NO place locally to get a puppy. The thought that these shelters are empty due to a high adoption rate is wonderful, but it does not solve the problem of what people do now. Eliminating the ability to sell animals in pet stores would only drive these consumers to online scams, internet sales with no personal interaction, and the increase of non-regulated breeders breeding poor quality pups.

Pet sales bans will affect small businesses in other ways too. Not only would the community be without a safe place to buy a pet, but those employees will now be out of a job. Some of our employees have been there well over twenty years! It is a family environment not just for our customers but for our staff as well.

At Heartland Pets we feel it is very important to have that initial human/animal bond experience. We have several rooms where customers and families can sit with their new potential puppy. It gives them time to interact with the animals, see their personalities, talk to a trained staff member, all of which will help guide them in their decision. Not only does this interaction help the customer, but it also helps the pups. Where else can you go to interact with puppies? Many of our customers that come in may have special needs or maybe can't have a dog where they live. This environment gives those a chance to play with a puppy, learn how to handle a small living creature or just destress! And it is a benefit to our puppies as well. It is time for the pup to learn social interaction. A pet store

is a wonderful environment for animals to bond with people. Those folks that play with our puppies but cannot own a dog for personal reasons are doing our puppies a service just as much as they are benefiting from the experience.

There are also many families who want a very specific breed of dog. Maybe it is a breed they had in the past, an allergy to specific breeds, or a breed that is suitable to their specific need. We, at Heartland Pets, have the ability to give the customer that very service. Allowing a family with a child suffering from certain dog allergies to hold a few different breeds may help narrow down the choices. Someone who wants to have a breed of dog they had as a child could easily contact us to aid in their search for that specific breed. Those that need a small dog for apartment living could use our knowledge to help them find that perfect fit.

The benefits of retail pet sales, regulated honestly, safely, and humanely certainly outweigh the potential risks involved if this was no longer an option. We at Heartland Pets have maintained our stellar reputation for 27 years. We take tremendous pride in what we do to support the well-being of the animals and give back to the community the knowledge and support they need to care for their much beloved pets.

Thank you for your consideration,

Richard Winslow
Owner
Heartland Pets

Wendi Proper
Manager
Heartland Pets