



The Michigan Kennel License Study

Version 7

October 13, 2015

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About the Study

Members of Puppy Mill Awareness of Southeast Michigan conducted a study of county and USDA-licensed breeding facilities in Michigan, with the goal of determining how many large commercial breeders are currently operating. These findings will help support the Large-scale Commercial Breeder Act (SB 339, HB 4898) to improve conditions in Michigan dog breeding facilities. Michigan’s Dog Law of 1919, specifically MCL 287.270, gives counties the duty of administering kennel licenses. We requested a listing of licensed kennels from each of Michigan’s 83 counties, including a listing of the number of dogs each kennel was licensed to have. Licensed kennels included those used for breeding, boarding, grooming, animal sheltering, rescue groups, hunting and sled dogs, and show dogs. We received 2009 kennel records for 80 counties totaling 1,947 kennels. Through the USDA’s online database, we also compiled a listing of Michigan’s USDA Class A (wholesale breeders licensed to sell puppies to pet stores). We established criteria for situations that might lead to overcrowding, inadequate care, or substandard conditions. These “red flag” kennels were identified as having more than four types of breeds in one facility, heavily advertising in classified ads, marketing designer dogs (combinations such as “Yorkipoos,” Goldendoodles,” and “Puggles”), advertising outside the state of Michigan, or being the subject of animal cruelty investigations by law enforcement authorities. Combined with the possession of a large number of dogs, these facilities appeared to be operating as commercial kennels with a surplus of popular puppies—in short, potential puppy mills.

Results

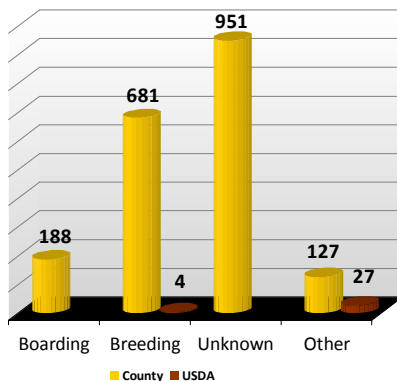
Of the 685 licensed breeding kennels, approximately 234 may have over 15 intact breeding dogs. Only 3% (20) of all licensed kennels may have over 50 dogs. Kennels with an unknown purpose do not show signs of heavy advertising or activity and most (85%) of them have under 15 dogs.

Summary

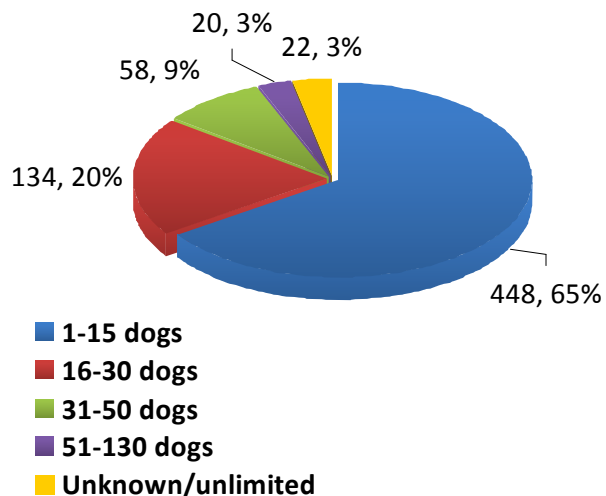
Findings from this study can be used to provide data to key decision makers to demonstrate the need for caps and to encourage changes in public policy that will help crack down on puppy mills. This research may help persuade lawmakers that better regulation of large commercial facilities may prevent commercial breeders from coming to our state.

Number of Kennel Types

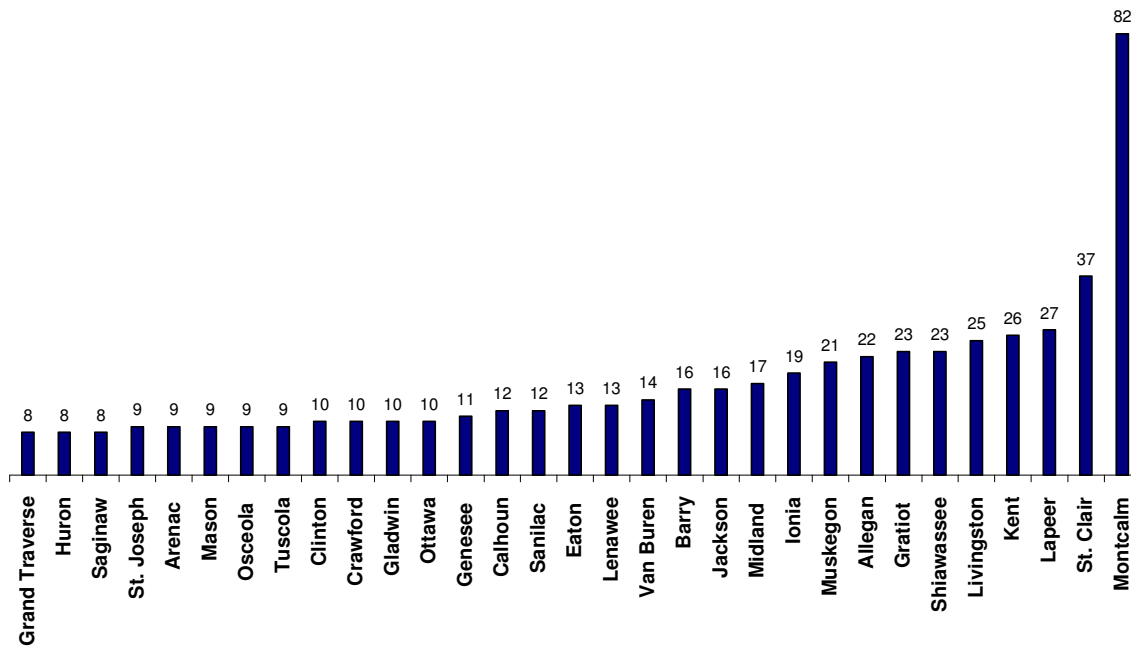
(85% of unknown kennel have <15 dogs)



Breeding Kennel Sizes



Number of Breeding Kennels by County



**Michigan Ranks 21
with only 4
commercial USDA
dog kennels**

STATE	ADD	Total	Ranking
MO		736	1
IA		251	2
OK		236	3
KS		196	4
AR		170	5
OH		132	6
IN		106	7
NE		80	8
SD		61	9
TX		32	10
MN		29	11
PA		29	12
WI		25	13
IL		24	14
NY		24	15
VA		7	16
CA		6	17
ND		6	18
KY		5	19
CO		4	20
MI		4	21
TN		4	22
GA		3	23
NC		3	24
OR		3	25
LA		2	26
MS		2	27
SC		2	28
WA		2	29
WY		2	30
AL		1	31
FL		1	32
MD		1	33
NM		1	34
Grand Total		2190	

History of Abuse

Below is a listing of recent animal abuse or seized cases involving Michigan breeding kennels, often with more than 50 dogs in each kennel:

- 2014 – 100 dogs surrendered by Renee Suchil, Pixie Puppies in Montcalm County
- 2014 – 90 dogs and puppies seized from online seller, Elaine Komorny, Raisin Tree Farms in Livingston County
- 2013 – 66 shelties seized, 2 found dead from Jean Hansen in Midland County
- 2013 – 160 dogs seized from John Jones in Missaukee County
- 2012 – 350 dogs seized from Cheri and George Burke in Allegan County
- 2011 – 80 dogs seized from Candace Shepard-Younce in Montcalm County
- 2011 – 11 dogs seized from James Griffin in Ontonagon County
- 2011 – 16 dogs taken by rescue group in Newygo County
- 2011 – 16 cockers dumped in Washtenaw County
- 2010 – 77 dogs seized from Roxanne Webster in Livingston County
- 2010 – 37 dogs seized from Don & Kathe Burkett in Washtenaw County
- 2010 – 24 dogs seized from Laura Springborn in Livingston County
- 2009 – 70 animals Seized from Kim Koss in Genesee County
- 2009 – 33 dogs seized from Ackley Kennels in Washtenaw County
- 2009 – 69 dogs seized from Joan Skillman in Ingham County
- 2008 – 67 dogs seized from Lori Nichiow (Lornich Kennels) in Macomb County
- 2008 – almost 60 animals seized from Patrick and Dixie Plunkett in Sanilac County
- 2007 – 232 dogs seized from John & Suzette Jones in Barry County
- 2006 – over 80 dogs seized from Virginia Lawrence in Calhoun County
- 2005 – 79 dogs seized from Pamela Keehbauch in Isabella County

Using this Information to Support Commercial Kennel Caps

Numerous states have included limits on the number of breeding animals that an individual or kennel may own, typically to 50 adult dogs. The information we have gathered can help demonstrate how reasonable these caps are. For example, a breeder with 40 female breeding dogs can produce 80 litters per year. With an average of 5.12 puppies per litter (average litter size of the top ten most popular AKC dog breeds), the breeder can produce 409 puppies a year. At an average sale price of \$596 per puppy, a breeder operating within the cap can make \$243,764.00 a year. This seems to indicate that puppy producers who would be affected by the cap can still make a significant income selling dogs, and are not what most people would consider small hobby businesses.

Example:

40 females X 2 litters a year X 5.12 pups per litter X \$596 per puppy = \$244,121.00 annual income.

This income is nearly five times the size of the national median household income of \$50,233.00 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 data).