

Pick of the Litter

CAPS Investigation (Fall 1997)

As part of our campaign against Shake A Paw, CAPS investigated Pick of the Litter, a large-scale brokerage facility in Minnesota in the fall of 1997. The owner, Kathy Bauck, told our investigators that she had 573 dogs who all have names. The February 25, 1998 inspection report listed 603 adult dogs and 309 puppies.

Our investigators saw dogs in a variety of enclosures. They saw numerous outdoor dirt pens with only doghouses for shelter. Ms. Bauck owner told them she brings all the dogs inside during winter. CAPS' investigators observed this would be impossible due to lack of space. Pick of the Litter had six buildings for breeding dogs, two buildings for puppies and one building for brokered puppies. Our investigators noticed that all the buildings had large accumulations of feces and inadequate ventilation. The building with the brokered puppies was the worst facility with respect to sanitation and ventilation. A concrete drainage ditch that ran the length of this building was covered with feces encrusted grates. All the buildings had a heavy fly infestation. In one building, the CAPS investigators saw old disposable syringes and needles scattered about.

Several Shelties housed underneath a pole barn had no hair. One CAPS investigator saw a dog with a prolapsed uterus. He also encountered a Dalmatian licking her dead puppy. The mother dog picked up the puppy several times and desperately tried to hand it to our investigator so that he could help her. According to a former Pick of the Litter employee, Ms. Bauck left puppies with the mother dogs so they could grieve. This employee claimed that dead puppies sometimes stayed in mothers' pen for as long as a week. Because Ms. Bauck's husband came into the kennel, the CAPS investigator was unable to take a photograph.

According to a former employee who filed a complaint with the Otter Tail Humane Society, Ms. Bauck threw dead dogs in a manure spreader. This employee saw her throw live newborn puppies in the spreader. The employee rescued the puppies. This employee stated that Pick of the Litter had animals buried out back or burned in the wood burner. In addition, she claimed there were dead dogs under the hay shed and in the silo.

Another former employee told the local humane society that Ms. Bauck made her hold down a mother dog while the owner did a C-section without adequate anesthesia. The mother and puppies died.

According to former employees and a local veterinarian, Pick of the Litter was keeping extra AKC blue slips. They alleged that computer records indicated Pick of the Litter was selling more dogs than they were whelping. Former employees claimed Ms. Bauck bought dogs listed in the newspaper and sold them with the extra blue slips. In addition, these employees claimed Pick of the Litter reused the AKC numbers of deceased dogs.

Based on information the Otter Tail Humane Society collected from former Pick of the Litter employees, sheriff investigators and the state veterinarian went on a "raid" of Pick of the Litter in November 1996. The sheriff's department would not allow a humane society employee to accompany them. However, they let a local veterinarian, Dr. William Rose, go with them. The

kennel manager told Dr. Rose they had lost 35 puppies in a five-day period. Employees also told him that Ms. Bauck had known about the raid in advance. The employees had been cleaning and painting for a couple of weeks. According to Dr. Rose, there were around 270 dogs on the premises even though Pick of the Litter had more than 500 at the time. The sheriff's department did not file charges. When Dr. Rose called the AKC to complain about Pick of the Litter's records, they told him they were not interested.

CAPS investigators also inspected two horrendous puppy mills in Minnesota and Wisconsin that sell puppies to Pick of the Litter. A USDA licensed breeder, who is just up the road from Pick of the Litter, bred Penny, the Shake A Paw puppy that died eight days after Ann Margaret Hinrichsen received her as a birthday present. An unlicensed breeder in Wisconsin bred LaVerne Reenan's Chow. This Shake A Paw puppy had bladder repair surgery for a congenital condition and now has severe hip dysplasia.

As part of the "Hard Copy" story, one of our investigators returned with a camera crew to Pick of the Litter and the two other puppy mills. They obtained hidden camera footage of all of these facilities. The conditions at the Minnesota breeder's facility were horrendous. There were more than 100 dogs in mink sheds and outdoor pens in the snow. The housing was piled with excrement. When the CAPS investigator asked the owner if this was her "puppy mill," she said "yes." It is unusual she didn't deny it was a puppy mill. She and her husband obtained a Class A license (breeder) after canceling their Class B license (broker) in August 1997. According to a USDA inspection report dated 8/4/97, this facility had no non-compliant standards or regulations identified on this inspection and met all requirements to be licensed as an "A" dealer. It is hard to believe such an inhumane facility would pass inspection.