Michelle F.

E Period

5/22/13

The Slaughter of Man’s Best Friend

“If you truly love pets, you would never work at a pet store”-- I reached this ironic conclusion as I read the horror stories of ex-employees of big corporation pet stores on online forums and my personal visit to the local PetSmart where I met the store’s jolly senior pet care coordinator, Tracy. Seeing her great love and passion, I asked her what she thought of selling pets to customers who she knew wouldn’t take good care of them. “Oh! It makes me so, so sad!” She cried. “I’ve been working here for over 14 years and I still haven’t gotten over it!” I then proceeded to see this in action as a young girl came with her parents to buy some new fish after theirs had died from a clear lack of proper care. The young girl pointed to some fish that suited her fancy but were inadequate for the tank they had and her parents requested Tracy to fetch them. I saw Tracy give them a stern warning and state the store’s no return policy as she handed them the plastic bag. Afterwards, as Tracy patiently gave advice to the customer whose parakeet was not eating, I thought of the people online who had mentioned it was commonplace for a seemingly healthy bird to die days later after being bought from PetSmart because being cramped in the bird cages of the store was detrimental to the bird’s health. Seeing that every word I saw online was true, I began to wonder how to reduce the ignorance of prospecting pet owners who are unaware of the responsibilities that come with the pet, and how to better the conditions of the pet as it undergoes the transaction of seller to owner. Further delving into the atrocious methods of the large commercial pet stores, I came to conclude that there is no practical way the humane treatment of a pet can be ensured in large, commercial pet stores. Although banning the sale of pets in commercial pet stores may compromise the convenience of prospective pet owners and the profit of the business, the nature of a large, profit-driven corporation is incompatible with the sale of vulnerable, sentient pets.

At first glance, banning the sale of pets in a pet store seems impractical and extreme. A portion of a pet store’s profit would be lost if it were only allowed to sell food and supplies. Employees and specialists would be laid off because they are not needed anymore. Pets would be more tedious, expensive, and thus inconvenient to acquire, which would cause even fewer pets to be bought and cared for. Thus, in the end, more animals will be left without owners and care. Furthermore, the issue of pet treatment does not seem like an immediate issue that the government should address compared to the other daunting problems the world is facing. Moreover, pet stores are already making efforts to ensure the quality and health of their pets. For instance, PetSmart promises “vet assured” pets and a 14-day return policy if pets are found to be unhealthy despite proper care (Feng).To prevent impulsive buying, a “cool down” period has been suggested to allot a few days between the desire to purchase and the final decision so the purchaser can weigh his decision more carefully (Woodruff 2). Stores could also spread awareness by placing signs in stores warning customers of the commitment required for raising a pet. Thus, banning the sale of pets in commercial pet stores is an extreme and unnecessary action that will harm the economy, cause inconvenience for prospective pet owners, and ultimately cause even more pets to suffer.

The profit that large pet companies will lose through banning the sale of pets is dishonest money. Despite their efforts to appear otherwise, major pet companies treat their animals as nothing more than cash crops. Thus, profit-minded corporations see no benefit in making sure each animal is happy. Every single large corporation is affiliated with puppy mills. Puppy mills are mass breeding operations where animals are crammed together in a small space and forced to breed as often as possible, since breeders who run these mills are driven by nothing more than profits (Ferris 4). These mills are rampant with disease and overproduce millions of puppies each year, and six to eight million of these pets crowd shelters each year (Ferris 5). By supporting these commercial companies, the inhumane treatment of pets is thus also supported. Banning pets from being sold in large, commercial pet stores would discourage the continuance of these inhumane puppy mills, which should also be outlawed. This would prevent the overproduction of pets and reduce traffic in animal shelters. As a result, the government will no longer need to fund these shelters as profusely and pay the price for the abuses of the pet mill industry.

Pet mills also have a detrimental environmental impact. The unsanitary conditions of pet mills cause the quarters to be rampant with disease which infect the animals living within them. Young animals are especially vulnerable and can contract intestinal parasites that can be spread to humans. Thus, the pet mill industry jeopardizes the health and safety of the community as well (Ferris 5).

Furthermore, unemployment will not be severe. Specialists will still be kept in stores because customers will still go to them for advice on what to buy for their pets. Although those working in the atrocious pet mills will lose their jobs, small, private breeding operations which treat their animals well will be encouraged to grow by the lack of competition. The prominence of more private pet breeders would make the purchase of pets still possible without extensive searching. These responsible breeders will ensure their pets will find a good home by performing background checks on their clients.In fact, stricter enforcement on pet stores and breeding operations would provide more jobs in the government (Ferris 20). Although banning the sale of pets from pet stores and outlawing pet mills will cause unemployment in these businesses, doing so will foster the growth of small, private businesses who are not zealous for profit and ultimately result in better treatment for pets.

Despite apparent efforts to ensure the welfare of their animals, big corporations must cut corners in order to sell a high number of pets quickly to obtain a lucrative profit. For instance, PetSmart claims that their pets are healthy and “vet approved” (Feng), being confined in a small glass container with numerous other hamsters will definitely compromise the animal’s immune system (Ferris 5). Commercial businesses thrive off of impulsive and irresponsible buying (Ferris 7). Thus, warning their customers against such actions would cause businesses to lose opportunities for quick money. During the Easter season, pet stores profit off people who buy live rabbits for decoration or gifts and then abandon them when they realize they cannot care for them (HRS 1). Combining major corporations’ greed and irresponsible consumers’ habits, it is clear why many pets end up in shelters. If pets could not be so easily obtained, the irresponsible treatment of pets would decline greatly.

However, it is not the fault of the store that a buyer cannot control themselves and fall into debt or kill a life. The belief that businesses are at fault is indicative of what has happened in society : the abandonment of personal responsibility. Even if pet stores were to accommodate irresponsible purchasing by offering a return policy on their pets, this causes the animal to be permanently traumatized from constantly being uprooted from its home. The idea of a “cooling off period,” a policy that allows for a few days between the desire and the final decision to purchase a pet, has also been suggested (Woodruff 2). However, doing so would divert personal responsibility to the hands of the government. Doing so would contribute to a greater frequency in rash actions because of the reassurance that the government will protect them. In the end, people cannot expect authorities to take care of their mistakes.

The humane treatment of live animals cannot be guaranteed in a profit-minded corporation. Thus, pets should not be sold in large corporations and mass breeding operations should also be banned. This would greatly decrease overpopulation, inhumane treatment, and the ignorance of the public. Pets should instead be obtained through animal shelters or professional, licensed breeders who are truly passionate about the pets they breed. Prospective owners who are truly willing to take on the responsibilities of keeping a pet will be willing to go through the process of tedious background checks and signing papers. By raising the standard for responsibility in pet owners, pets will be able to live better lives in these homes.

Michelle F.

E Period

5/22/13

Works Cited

Feng, Michelle. *PetSmart Store Policy*. Photograph. 2013. JPEG file.



Ferris, Lauren, "Animal Law - Greed v. Humanity: The Need for Arkansas to Regulate Commercial Breeders and Ban the Retail Sale of Cats and Dogs in Pet Stores and Over the Internet.” University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law Review:Online-Only. 29 April, 2013.

“Rabbit Rescue Organization Warns Parents Against Impulse Purchase of Rabbits for Easter.” *House Rabbit Society.* 6 April 2009. Web. 21 May 2013. http://www.rabbit.org/easter/2010release.html

Woodruff, Cathy. “It worked out this time, but pet stores should rethink policy.” *Times Union*. 11 October 2009. Web. 21 May 2013. http://blog.timesunion.com/advocate/it-worked-out-this-time-but-pet-stores-should-rethink-policy/1959/