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MEDIA CONTACT:

Rhonda Manville, Marketing Director

(425) 274-1513

Rhonda@seattlehumane.org

www.seattlehumane.org

PUPPY MILLS

The Oprah Winfrey Show puts the Spotlight on Puppy Mills.

BELLEVUE, WA – Puppy mills are no place to get a pet. But it's not easy to know if a puppy came from a mill, as an April 4 feature on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* revealed.

How does a responsible animal lover evaluate? First we have to define "puppy mill," but this can be tricky because the answer may depend on who you ask.

Activist groups have broadened the term. As a result, anti-breeding groups lobby to impose breeding restrictions and high license fees by deliberately blurring the lines between responsible breeding operations and real puppy mills. They use emotional rhetoric and pictures of dirty kennels and sickly dogs to imply that most or all breeders will subject their dogs to abusive lives unless they are regulated.

The American Kennel Club avoids defining "puppy mill" but does label a commercial breeder as one who "breeds dogs as a business, for profit" and a hobby breeder as "one who breeds purebred dogs occasionally to justifiably improve the breed, not for purposes of primary income."

Distinct from puppy mills are the hobby breeders, who typically are pure-bred dog fanciers who have a breed or two and follow a breeding plan to preserve and protect each breed; or the backyard breeder whose pet gets bred by accident.

A real puppy mill is operated by a breeder who produces puppies with no breeding program, little attention to puppy placement, and poor health and socialization practices. Conditions in puppy mills are generally substandard and may be deplorable, and puppies and adult dogs may be malnourished, sickly, and of poor temperament.

You can avoid puppy mills by adopting from a shelter, where 25 percent of the dogs are pure-bred, or by going to a reputable breeder who carefully interviews you and educates you about the breed, including health considerations.

The Seattle Humane Society was founded in 1897 to bring people and pets together. The Seattle Humane Society does this today through its low-fee spay/neuter surgery program, pet workshops and training, pet food bank, humane teen club, visiting pets program and more. The Seattle Humane Society is located in Bellevue, at 13212 SE Eastgate Way. For directions and more information, visit www.seattlehumane.org or call (425) 641-0080.

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