

# **PETA**

## **FACTSHEET**

Companion Animal  
Theft Pack

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# Animal Dealers and “Bunchers”

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## **The Dealer Network**

Animal dealers are part of a complex network that supplies an endless stream of animals to pet stores, puppy mills, fighting rings, satanic cults, and research facilities. Many of the dogs and cats traded by dealers are former companion animals who have been stolen from their homes and sold to them by thieves/intermediaries called “bunchers.”

Bunchers obtain dogs and cats in various ways; newspaper “free to a good home” ads are one common source. Posing as a “family man,” the buncher may bring along a child when picking up a giveaway animal. Bunchers typically clear out entire neighborhoods, then transport the animals several states away to avoid detection, although some animals are sold locally. Animals are also stolen during house burglaries, as well as from cars, sidewalks, and shopping areas.

Bunchers then sell their stolen animals to Class B dealers, who are licensed by the USDA and sell animals obtained from “random sources” to laboratories or who sell more than 24 dogs or cats per year at the wholesale level. Most stolen animals will wind up in laboratories, where they will be force-fed poisons, exposed to radiation, addicted to chemicals, or subjected to other painful procedures. Commenting on the presence of obviously owned dogs at an Arkansas research facility, one lab technician stated, “Nobody says anything. . . . They just toss the collars into a heap.”<sup>1</sup>

Technically, Class B licensees are required to have a kennel that provides proper shelter and veterinary care. In fact, however, the USDA has licensed facilities where dogs are chained to car fenders and housed in old clothes dryers. Dealers are generally not willing to cut profits by providing medical attention to sick or injured animals. An abundance of new arrivals makes mortalities “affordable.”

## **Classroom Casualties**

Some dealers make their living exclusively by selling animals for dissection. A PETA

undercover investigation revealed that the largest suppliers of animals for dissection depend on Class B dealers to stock their warehouses. Investigators documented deplorable conditions at one cattery operated by John H. Wise, including cats being housed in filthy cages containing other cats who had died. His cousin, Al Wise, operated a similar cattery and sold cats to Carolina Biological Supply Company. Despite claims from these facilities that they only dealt in animals who had been euthanized at local pounds, undercover videotape showed that deliveries of live cats, many wearing collars, were common. Upon arrival, the animals were shoved into gas chambers and then hooked up to embalming machines, often still alive and struggling.

## **Hell Begins Before the Lab**

PETA’s undercover investigations have revealed many other abuses in the dealer pipeline: kicking, beating, and throwing animals; overcrowded transport conditions; maggot-infested food, lack of food and water; newborn animals’ being crushed to death or eaten alive by stressed cagemates; and lack of shelter in extreme weather.

The USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service inspectors are responsible for monitoring dealer facilities for compliance with regulations for record-keeping, as well as for physical conditions of the facility and of the animals themselves. However, enforcement is extremely weak; most inspectors allow dealers to repeatedly “correct” violations. In many cases, activists have documented consistent, severe violations and pressured the USDA for years before action was taken. The few dealers who are ordered to close down have been known to transfer ownership of the kennel to other family members in order to beat the system.

## **References**

<sup>1</sup>Judith Reitman, *Stolen for Profit*, Pharos Books, 1992.

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