

December 13, 2022

*Via email*

Corine Cowan, Owner  
Family Pet Center  
Chesapeake, VA  
[REDACTED]

**Re: Removal of False and Misleading Claims on Family Pet Center's Website**

Dear Ms. Cowan:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to demand Family Pet Center (FPC) immediately end its false and misleading claims [on its website](#) that "[n]one of our dogs are puppy mill dogs" and that you "ensure that all of the puppies ... are bred in the best conditions possible."

Despite FPC's representation to consumers, the company acquires puppies from breeders that consumers would consider to be puppy mills. Puppy mills are commercial farming operations in which typically purebred dogs are raised in large numbers, which often includes raising dogs in poor, substandard conditions. FPC sells to customers puppies who were born in several facilities that contain hundreds of dogs with documented violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA).<sup>1</sup>

As just one example, FPC sources puppies from BJ's & Guys, a Kansas breeding operation that houses nearly 1,000 dogs and has a substantial history of AWA citations. BJ's and Guys has been cited by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on several occasions for failure to provide dogs with adequate veterinary care, failure to maintain or provide proper housing and shelter, and more. At the facility, dogs have been found to be housed outdoors with no bedding in the bitter winter cold and left in extreme heat without sufficient air conditioning in the summer. The USDA also documented several untreated injuries and ailments in dogs and determined dog and puppy enclosures to be inadequate as they were prone to cause injuries to the animals.

Virginia state law prohibits FPC from making advertisements that are untrue, deceptive, or misleading to consumers to induce any sale. Va. Code § 18.2-216. Assertions made in a FAQ section in marketing materials, such as a website,

<sup>1</sup> These AWA citations were issued notwithstanding that the USDA has been admonished by the Office of Inspector General, the agency's internal watchdog, for failing to adequately enforce the AWA with respect to puppy mills. See USDA, OIG Report 33002-4-SF, APHIS Animal Care Program, Inspections of Problematic Dealers 1-2 (2010), [https://www.aspca.org/sites/default/files/oig\\_audit\\_33002-4-sf.pdf](https://www.aspca.org/sites/default/files/oig_audit_33002-4-sf.pdf).

PEOPLE FOR  
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Norfolk, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA

PETA FOUNDATION IS AN OPERATING  
NAME OF THE FOUNDATION TO  
SUPPORT ANIMAL PROTECTION.

ENTITIES:

- PETA U.S.
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- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

qualify as advertisements. *Am. Demolition & Nuclear Decommissioning, Inc. v. IBCS Grp., Inc.*, 21 F. Supp. 3d 632, 636 (W.D. Va. 2014). FPC's statements that it does not sell customers puppies that come from puppy mills, and that it ensures that all puppies "are bred in the best conditions possible," are false and misleading to ordinary consumers who would certainly consider a breeder such as BJ's and Guys to be a puppy mill, and the unlawful conditions documented at that facility to fall far short of "the best conditions possible."

By specifically including the representations on its website, FPC clearly recognizes the importance of animal welfare concerns to its consumers and, in particular, the public's repudiation of the suffering of dogs and puppies in puppy mills. By making these false representations, FPC also leads consumers to unknowingly purchase puppies that may have severe health issues, leading to a cycle of suffering for both the animals and humans involved.

We look forward to your prompt confirmation that you have removed these false and misleading claims from your website and any other marketing materials. Please confirm by December 30, 2022, that these claims have been removed. PETA hopes to resolve this issue with you before pursuing any additional legal action, including but not limited to enforcement action from the relevant authorities.

Very truly yours,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Mary Maerz.

Mary Maerz  
Counsel

A black rectangular redaction box covering the contact information of Mary Maerz.