FACT SHEET FOR IOWA LEGISLATORS · NOVEMBER 2026

Iowa licenses dog breeders, but most online sellers are outside that system

Iowa licenses and inspects commercial breeders every year. But BOB found more Iowa breeders selling puppies online with no license on record than there are licensed breeders in the entire state.

387

Licensed dog breeders in Iowa: 139 with a USDA license and 248 licensed only by the state.

624

Iowa breeders selling puppies online on three websites with no state or USDA license on record.

44

Online breeders who list 4+ breeding females, enough to require an Iowa license, but don't appear on the state list.

127

Iowa breeders BOB documented selling puppies to pet stores in 2025, many in other states.

The unlicensed market

BOB reviewed Iowa breeders on Good Dog, Puppies.com and AKC Marketplace and found 811 after removing those listed on more than one site.



Most are small breeders below Iowa's licensing threshold and selling legally. But no inspector visits them, and 44 advertise four or more breeding females, the point at which Iowa law requires a license.

Federal oversight is shrinking

172 Iowa breeders have had a USDA license cancelled since 2020, and 26 of them still hold only a state license. The share of USDA inspections in Iowa that cite a violation has also dropped:



Share of regular USDA inspections at Iowa dog breeders and brokers citing at least one violation (attempted inspections excluded). Fewer citations doesn't necessarily mean better conditions, given the drop in federal licensees.

How neighboring states compare

State	Licenses breeders	Inspects breeders	Puppy lemon law	Licenses pet stores
Iowa	**Yes**	**Annually**	**No**	**Yes**
Illinois	**Yes**	**Annually**	**Yes**	Retail puppy sales banned
Minnesota	**Yes**	**Every 2 years**	**Yes**	No
Missouri	**Yes**	**Annually**	No	**Yes**
Nebraska	**Yes**	**Every 2 years**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Wisconsin	**Yes**	**Every 2 years**	No	**Yes**

Source: BOB's State Requirements research, which tracks breeder and pet store laws in all 50 states.

Approaches other states use

Iowa already licenses and inspects commercial breeders. Other states have added protections that address online sales and buyers who end up with sick puppies.

Puppy lemon laws

22 states, including neighboring Illinois, Minnesota and Nebraska, give buyers recourse, such as a refund or reimbursed vet costs, when a puppy turns out to be sick shortly after sale. Iowa doesn't.

Breeder advertising disclosure

Pennsylvania, Texas and neighboring Wisconsin have laws covering what breeders must disclose when they advertise puppies for sale, which bears directly on online sellers.

Pet store sourcing rules

Several states require pet stores to disclose where puppies came from or restrict which breeders they may buy from. Illinois bans retail puppy sales statewide.

Inspection frequency

States vary from annual inspections, as in Iowa, Illinois and Missouri, to every two years in Minnesota, Nebraska and Wisconsin. Pennsylvania inspects twice a year.

Pet stores in Iowa

BOB tracks 4 open pet stores in Iowa that sell puppies. Three are rated High on BOB's pet store sourcing concern scale. BOB doesn't yet have enough sourcing data to rate the fourth. Iowa breeders also supply pet stores across the country: BOB documented 127 doing so in 2025.

About these numbers

- **Licensed breeders** come from BOB's database of USDA and Iowa state licensees. BOB's license audit is ongoing, so figures may be updated.
- **Online breeders:** BOB reviewed Iowa sellers on Good Dog, Puppies.com and AKC Marketplace, removing duplicates across sites and checking each against Iowa's licensing list and BOB's database. Facebook, Craigslist and breeders' own websites aren't included.
- **Breeding dog counts** are what breeders list on their own profiles.
- **Inspections** come from USDA APHIS inspection reports compiled by BOB.
- **State laws** come from BOB's State Requirements research. Please check current statutes before drafting legislation.

About Bailing Out Benji

Bailing Out Benji (BOB) is a national nonprofit that researches the commercial dog breeding industry. BOB maintains a database of licensed and unlicensed breeders, brokers, pet stores and online sellers used by legislators, regulatory agencies and animal welfare organizations. BOB is glad to answer questions or provide more detailed data for your district.

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Shared with you by a constituent

Name _____ City / ZIP _____

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