



Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn signs legislation on Sunday during a PAWS Chicago pet adoption event on Damen Avenue. The new law, which goes into effect Jan. 1, is intended to inform consumers whether a dog or cat has come from a breeding mill. **NANCY STONE/TRIBUNE PHOTO**

New state law seeks to protect pet buyers

Sellers must disclose breeder, medical information on cages

By Kristen Schorsch
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Flanked by Eddie Spaghetti and a dozen other furry, four-legged friends, Gov. Pat Quinn on Sunday signed a law aimed at protecting consumers before they buy a dog or cat that might come from a breeding mill.

As of Jan. 1, pet stores, animal shelters and control facilities must disclose on the cages of dogs and cats the name and location of their breeders, as well as the animal's medical history.

The law is the first of its kind nationwide, said Jordan Matyas, Illinois state director of the Hu-

mane Society of the United States.

Existing state law requires sellers to disclose pet information to consumers, but the law lacks teeth and doesn't say when sellers have to provide the information, Matyas said.

"This is a very important way in Illinois for us to get humane treatment of our animals," Quinn said as the tails of pets standing near him wagged. "We don't want anybody buying an animal that has been inhumanely treated before its sale, and unfortunately that has existed."

Fines for disobeying the new law can cost up to \$1,000 and include mandatory probation.

Matyas said the law is key, but he also wants consumers to fight the urge to buy an adorable puppy from a pet shop and research the dog's breeder first.

Chuck Hartke is a consultant for Petland and Happiness is Pets, a chain of suburban Chicago pet stores, and negotiated hard against what he said were stiff requirements that would put his clients out of business. He said he's happy with the final product.

"No pet shop wants to sell a puppy or a kitten that is not healthy because it's not good for business," Hartke said.

Quinn and Matyas touted the new law against the backdrop of bustling Damen Avenue in Chicago's Bucktown neighborhood. From Shakespeare to Milwaukee avenues, PAWS Chicago and more than 30 other animal shelters set up shop in front of various businesses with about 250 dogs and cats ready to be adopted. The event takes place a few times each summer, a PAWS official said.

Olivia Schultz, 14, of Lincoln Park, and Elle Wilson, 17, of Wilmette, couldn't take their eyes away from two sleepy black Lab mixes nestling into each other's necks.

"I've been trying all summer to convince my parents to get a dog," Olivia said as she gently stroked the puppies.

She and Elle tried to leave a few times, but the pups drew them back in.

"Oh, my God. Look at you guys," Elle fawned, then snapped a photo of the dogs on her cell phone.

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