

Oliver

Our plan all along was to adopt at a local animal shelter or animal rescue, however on August 8th 2015, while driving home my husband and I saw an eye catching sign outside a Petland store in Lewis Center. We entered the store without any expectations and played with numerous cute puppies for sale. We then locked eyes with a precious 10 week old Rhodesian Ridgeback and life as we knew it had changed forever. We drove away that day with a giant cage, dog food, and dog toys in the trunk of the car and a new little best friend on my lap in the front seat.

About 6 weeks later, at 4 months of age, Oliver was diagnosed with an incurable Kidney Disease. We were initially told that the average lifespan for dogs with Kidney Disease was 3 – 5 years (versus 10 – 12 years for a healthy dog of his breed.) We were devastated, but were optimistic that Oliver could live to the 5 year mark with proper medical care, routine checkups/bloodwork, veterinarian prescribed diet/nutrition, and natural supplements (Little did we know we would how fast these bills would add up)

On February 22nd, at almost 9 months of age, Oliver's internal medicine veterinarian at MedVet in Columbus revealed that Oliver's most recent bloodwork showed his disease was progressing at an aggressively accelerated pace and he had around 6 months to live. This alluded to the fact that Oliver had Congenital Renal Dysplasia (Congenital Renal Dysplasia is a type of Kidney Disease that causes abnormal kidney development in the fetus. Renal Dysplasia can either be inherited and genetic, or acquired by something called an intrauterine fetal infection, which is a bacterial or viral infection of fetal tissues that occurs in the mother's uterus during pregnancy. Possible causes of intrauterine fetal infections include the canine herpesvirus, poisoning, and fetal trauma.)

As we were attempting to process the sad news, an additional blood test was ordered. Those results came back and we were made aware that Oliver's kidney levels had doubled in less than just one week's time. Those levels indicated that Oliver may only have a few weeks to live. It was almost impossible to imagine and accept that our little Oliver would have such a limited lifespan.

One week later, Oliver started to show physical symptoms such as increased thirst and urination, lethargy, weakness, vomiting, and diarrhea. We took him to MetVet for fluids and anti- nausea medication.

John & Ashley Toothman

After only a couple days, Oliver's health had declined so dramatically that he was experiencing Kidney Failure. Unfortunately Oliver's type of Congenital Kidney Disease wreaks havoc on the entire body. Animals with Renal Dysplasia experience uremia poisoning, which is an intolerably high level of nitrogen-containing metabolic waste products in the blood. So basically Oliver was being poisoned from the inside out.

Oliver would shake in pain for hours at time. He couldn't stand up or lay down without assistance. He completely lost his appetite and refused to eat. Even though he wasn't eating, he still vomited several times a day and night. Oliver had to be taken out at least once every hour to go to the bathroom. He consistently wet and soiled himself due to lack of bowel control. He had very bloody diarrhea. He also developed severe mouth ulcers which caused consistent bloody saliva to drool out of his mouth, and as a result was unable to drink any water.

At 11:57 am on Monday, March 7th 2016, my husband and I were sitting on our local Veterinarian's exam room floor with tears in our eyes, saying goodbye to our 9 month old best friend. Due to the severity of his Kidney Failure and at the advice of our veterinarian, Oliver was put to sleep and set free from all the undeserved pain and suffering and went home to be with his Creator.

We had just lost our little buddy, incurred nearly \$6,000 worth of Vet expenses, and still owed towards Oliver's original purchase price of \$3,900.....We had been communicating with Petland's customer service division, Pawsitive Solutions from the time our Vet first discovered Oliver's elevated kidney levels. We were offered a few different settlements that included a replacement dog, but each settlement offer came with confidentiality clauses that would prevent us from even telling our closest family and friends about the medical condition Oliver died from. If any third party were to inquire about what happened to Oliver, we would be contractually obligated to respond "We have no dispute with Petland" and we were to provide no further information. Oliver had become a member of our family. All of our friends, relatives, neighbors had come to know and love him, so the thought of not acknowledging his existence is something we could not accept.

We wondered how many silent voices are out there because of the non-disclosure clause and the risk of injunctive relief. We came to the conclusion that we can't be the only consumer in Ohio who has had a similar experience. We decided to do some research.

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The Humane Society defines a Responsible Breeder as such:

- 1) Encourages you to spend time with the puppy's parents—at a minimum, the pup's mother—when you visit
- 2) Allows you to visit and willingly shows you all areas where puppies and breeding dogs spend their time.
- 3) Keeps their breeding dogs as you feel a responsible person would keep their pets: not overpopulated, crowded, dirty, or continually confined to cages
- 4) Explains in detail the potential genetic and developmental problems inherent to the breed and provides documentation that the puppy's parents and grandparents have been professionally evaluated in an effort to breed those problems out of their puppies. (This will include testing for genetic disease)
- 5) Provides you with a written contract and health guarantee and allows plenty of time for you to read it thoroughly.

Unfortunately in Oliver's case, none of the above was done and/or confirmed. We did not receive Oliver's breeder information at the time of purchase or any time throughout his life. It wasn't until after Oliver passed away that we were only provided with a breeder's name and address, and this was because we requested it. After hours of research we were still unable to find contact information such as a phone number, email, website, etc... However, we did discover a breeder with the same last name and from the same town in Indiana who had made the Humane Society's Latest List of the 100 Worst Puppy Mills in the United States (despite being USDA licensed.)

We also saw a report stating that the majority of pet store puppies are sourced not from breeders, but from brokers (AKA pet dealers who are engaged in the business of re-selling puppies who were bred elsewhere.) Pawsitive Solutions gave us the name of a breeder, so we found it very peculiar that Oliver was ACA registered in Indiana, but both of his parents were registered in Missouri. Lastly we found out that because large volume breeders focus on profit, dogs are often bred with little regard for genetic quality. Those puppies are prone to congenital and hereditary conditions, just like Oliver was. Sadly these are questions and concerns we may never have an answer for, due to the fact that the threshold for "high volume breeders" is too high to properly enforce.

All in all, we felt misled. We thought that purchasing a puppy from a pet store would be similar to purchasing a car from a dealership, in that there would be warranties and most importantly that the companies would not turn a blind eye as to where their products were coming from.

John & Ashley Toothman

John and I were blessed with the gift of unconditional love and joy wrapped up in the form of a beautiful puppy named Oliver. Our hope is that we can find justice for Oliver, for other well-intentioned dog-lovers like ourselves, and for all the other innocent puppies that have or will have significantly reduced lifespans due to negligent breeding practices.

Please Vote NO on Senate Bill 331