

GEORGIA

— Cute puppies might be on the minds of holiday shoppers this time of year, making even more urgent a Humane Society of the United States warning to "never buy a puppy from a pet store." A recent undercover investigation by the Humane Society at a Petland store in the Atlanta area reportedly found a dead puppy in the chain's Kennesaw store, and an employee described coming into work to find deceased puppies on multiple occasions, among other findings.

Petland denied all charges of poor care for the animals it sells. "We are very disappointed that HSUS did not reach out to us with any concerns as we have always urged them to contact us directly as it relates to the health and care of our pets," the company said in a statement to Patch.

Following the undercover operation, the Humane Society, or HSUS, released a report Tuesday, naming Blue Ribbon Puppies of Indiana as a source for disease outbreaks among dogs sold by Petland. According to HSUS, Blue Ribbon Puppies sells puppies to at least five of the six Petland stores in Georgia. Petland, Inc., an international chain of puppy-selling pet stores, has six stores in Georgia, located in the Mall of Georgia, in Buford; along with Dalton; Dunwoody; Kennesaw; Columbus and Rome.

"Almost all of the Georgia Petland stores, we have confirmed five of six — the Columbus store is unknown — are getting puppies from that same distributor who was linked to a major disease outbreak that made over 100 people sick," said John Goodwin, senior director of the Stop Puppy Mills Campaign of HSUS, in the report.

In February 2018, WSB-TV reported that Kate Singleton, who worked at the Mall of Georgia Petland, became seriously ill after being exposed to a puppy harboring the *Campylobacter* bacteria. The teen was rushed to the hospital with a fever near 105. "It felt like you were dying," she told the station after spending four days in the hospital.

"It's something as a parent you don't think of," her mother told WSB. "You buy a puppy for Christmas; you don't think it will be dangerous to your child."

Petland said *Campylobacter* is commonly found in puppies, regardless of the source.