



The Avian Welfare Coalition

“Dedicated to the Welfare and Protection of Captive Birds”

An Open Letter to Animal Protection Organizations that partner with Petco and PetSmart and their Affiliates (Petco Foundation and PetSmart Charities)

Both **Petco and PetSmart continue to sell live animals in their stores** including small mammals, birds, and reptiles. The retail sale of these animals and in some cases even the keeping of some of these species as “pets” is fraught with animal welfare problems. Ethical issues surrounding the production, acquisition, and retail sale of bird, reptiles, and amphibians are particularly acute with life-long welfare implications, impacts on wild populations, and lack of oversight of breeding mills that mass produce animals for these chain stores. Additionally, the retail sales add to the burden of unwanted animals borne by species-specific rescues and some shelters.

At a time when many companies are focusing on sustainability and social responsibility, it is disappointing that Petco and PetSmart fail to recognize the sale of birds, reptiles, and other animals is incongruent with those goals.

Until such a time, organizations that advocate for animal welfare should make clear that they oppose such sales as just as many have done regarding the sale of dogs and cats at retail venues.

It creates confusion and sends mixed messages when animal protection organizations, especially large national organizations, allow the charity arms of these organizations (Petco Foundation and PetSmart Charities) to sponsor their events, ignoring the practices of their corporate arms that bear their names. These corporate charity arms effectively serve as public relations for the corporations even if their governance is separated. Indeed, in the eyes of the public there is no distinction. Publicly partnering with these foundations is a tacit endorsement of the companies and their practices.

Animal protection organizations should ask themselves whether they would partner with Petco or PetSmart if they sold dogs and cats? It is revealing that reputable organizations do not partner with the charity arm of PetLand (which sells puppies).

Animal advocates should question why non-profit organizations whose missions include protecting *all* animals, would continue to partner with Petco and PetSmart either directly or via their charity/PR arms despite this obvious contradiction and double standard.

At minimum, such organizations should issue public statements that they oppose the retail sale of live animals at these chain stores on their websites and in any promotional material associated with events. Additionally, they should share concerns about the retail sale of live animals directly with their contacts at these affiliates who no doubt can at least communicate these issues to their corporate parents.

www.avianwelfare.org