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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PIJAC Recommends an Immediate Temporary Moratorium on the Importation of Firebelly and Paddletail Newts**

U.S. – The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) is recommending that all exporters, shippers, importers and buyers of *Cynops orientalis* (Firebelly) and *Pachytriton labiatus* (Paddletail) newts immediately establish a voluntary moratorium on importing them into the United States. We further recommend that all non-retail businesses engaged in the salamander trade regularly sanitize their facilities as a prophylactic measure, as treatments are developed, out of an abundance of caution.

PIJAC, along with other concerned organizations, have been in discussions with the United States Government for over a year concerning the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*, or Bsal, fungus. This fungus, which is native to Asia, has impacted fire salamander populations in Belgium and the Netherlands. We have become extremely concerned that Bsal or other pathogens could make their way to the United States prior to any government action to stop it.

Government, industry, NGOs and academia are working to develop effective testing and treatment regimens. Until such time as these can be developed and distributed, the threat to the U.S. salamander population dictates that the responsible course of action is to temporarily suspend imports of Firebelly and Paddletail newts.

And, as is always critical, please remind your customers that pets should never be released into the wild.

Should such a pathogen be introduced to the United States, we fear that it could mean the end of responsible ownership of these animals entirely. We will continue to communicate with the industry about progress being made and announce when it is once again safe to import these newts, and what steps to take in order to do so safely.

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) provides its members a voice in state and national legislative issues through advocacy and timely information regarding upcoming policy issues that affect the pet industry, pet owners, and the animals they care for. Join PIJAC today at [www.pijac.org](http://www.pijac.org).

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**PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

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