March 13, 2020

An Open Letter to All State and Local Government Officials Regarding Pets and COVID-19 Precautions

We in the responsible pet care community are extremely concerned by the threat to human health posed by the rapidly evolving coronavirus pandemic, and commend the swift actions you and your peers across the country are taking to safeguard the population. As you take defensive steps by directing event cancellations and facility closures in order to create social distances that will help control the spread of disease, we urge you to also consider the well-being of the pets and other animals loved by the citizens in your communities.

According to the 2019-2020 APPA National Pet Owners Survey, 67% of American households (84.9 million) own at least one pet. 95% of pet owners consider their pets to be part of the family. It is vital that businesses that provide products or services for the care of pets, and those that house animals, are included among the critical infrastructure that is allowed to remain open throughout the crisis. Just as grocery stores and hospitals provide necessary sustenance and medical care to humans, pet businesses must remain operational to ensure the continued humane care of animals.

Pet stores supply nearly one-third of all dog and cat food needed by the pet-owning population; that percentage is greatly increased for food required by smaller pets like small mammals, reptiles and fish. Grocery stores that may be allowed to remain open generally only offer basic pet food options and they don’t have the specialized food, supplements and even medication that are required to maintain the health of millions of beloved pets and animals nationwide—nor are they set up logistically to serve ALL pets in this country. Grocery stores alone cannot fulfill the need and animals would needlessly suffer.

Additionally, many national and local retail pet supply stores also offer veterinary care and pet boarding services on site. Forcing these stores to close in many cases will also shut down access to veterinary care and a dependable facility to temporarily house pets in that community.

It should be noted that pet stores which sell animals—including puppies, kittens, small animals, birds, reptiles and fish—must remain operational to at least a limited degree so that staff can take appropriate care of the animals housed there. Since staff will need to be on site regardless of whether or not the store is open, it makes sense to allow them to provide pet owners with necessary food and care items.

You are already taking every measure necessary to protect the most vulnerable members of our society, the elderly and the immunocompromised. We ask you to also ensure that your community has the ability to provide appropriate care for the pets and animals that depend on them, and list pet stores as essential retailers that are exempt from any mandatory closures.
If you have any questions or need additional information, we in the responsible pet care community stand ready to help you safeguard both human and animal health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Mike Bober, President and CEO, Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council
Dana Brooks, President and CEO, Pet Food Institute
Steve King, CEO, American Pet Products Association
Vic Mason, President, World Pet Association
Celeste Powers, President, Pet Industry Distributors Association

Retailer Community:

Ron Coughlin, CEO, Petco
J.K. Symancyk, President & CEO, PetSmart
Chris McCurdy, Interim President, PetSmart Charities
Joe Watson, President and CEO, Petland
Chris Rowland, CEO, Pet Supplies Plus
Ryan Boyle, Owner, Petland, Joplin, MO
Samantha Boyle, Owner, Petland, Rogers, AR
Cindy Knowles and Stephanie Earl, Owners, Furrylicious, Whitehouse Station, NJ
Keith Evans, Owner, Petland Montgomery, Montgomery, AL
Laura Reid, President, FishMart, West Haven, CT
Cynthia Daluise, Owner, Arcadia Pets, Staten Island, NY
Luis Marquez, President/Owner, Petland, Pembroke Pines, FL, Naples, FL, Miami, FL, Plantation, FL, Davie, FL, Largo, FL, Tyler, TX
John Stottele, LLC Member/Owner, The Family Puppy, Troy, MI, Novi, MI, Flint, MI
Stephen Benecke, Owner, Petland, Bradenton, FL
Joshua Nie, General Manager, Petland, Frisco, TX
Justin Kerr and Kayla Kerr, Owners, Puppyworld, Olympia WA, Puppyland, Puyallup WA, Puppyland, Meridian ID
Joseph W Wagner Jr, Owner, Today’s Pet, Inc., Elkridge, MD
Rebecca Hertel, Owner, Petland, West Wichita, KS
Chris Fleming, Owner, Pinnacle Pet, Neosho, MO
Staci Williams, Owner, Petland Topeka, Topeka, KS
Jim Sparks, Owner, Park Pet Shop Inc., Chicago, IL
Kristin Smith, Owner, Four Paws and a Tail, Blaine, MN
Ron and Wendy Solsrud, Owners, Petland Iowa City, Iowa City, IA
Douglas Staley, Owner, Pet Palace of New City, New City, NY
Kristin Knight Smith, Owner, Four Paws and a Tail, Blaine, MN
Jonathan Dubreuil and Jeff Morton, Owners, Shake A Paw, Green Brook, NJ and Union NJ
Dana West, The pet Shoppe, Middletown, NJ
Mitch and Jeanae Thomson, Just Puppies Inc., Towson, MD, and Rockv, MD
Marc Jacobs, Shake A Paw, Lynbrook, NY
Mike Gonidakis, President, Citizens for Responsible Pet Ownership
Brad Parker, Kristen Parker and Lamar Parker, Owners, Petland Kennesaw GA, Petland Mall of GA Buford GA, Petland Summerville SC, Petland Sarasota FL
David Jacoby and Holly Hemingway, Owners, Citipups Chelsea and Citipups Village, New York, NY