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PIJAC ISSUES GUIDANCE TO PET BUSINESSES ON INVASIVE ZEBRA MUSSEL THREAT

Alexandria, Va. – April 8, 2021 – The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council has released updated comprehensive guidance to pet businesses on how to correctly handle aquatic moss ball products and aquariums that could contain Zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*), an invasive species recently discovered in the United States. Zebra mussels, which are fingernail-sized mollusks native to the Caspian Sea region of Asia, were found last month within moss balls being sold and used in aquariums in stores in multiple states, including Oregon, Washington and Florida.

“We at PIJAC are actively working with our members as well as state and federal agencies led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to update and share guidance to mitigate the spread of invasive zebra mussels,” said Bob Likins, PIJAC vice president of government affairs. “We urge the entire pet care community, as responsible environmental stewards, to take immediate and aggressive action to eliminate Zebra mussels and keep them from entering waterways where they will cause significant damage to both aquatic ecosystems and property.”

Zebra mussels are regarded as one of the most disruptive invasive species in North America. Adult mussels can stay alive for several days outside of water and commonly attach to boats, fishing equipment and aquarium plants. They clog water filtration pipelines, render beaches unusable, and damage boats, as well as negatively impact aquatic ecosystems by harming native organisms.

Based on the best available science, the guidelines have been updated to include information on how to properly dispose of moss ball products and decontaminate tanks specifically for suppliers, retailers and consumers/hobbyists. Pet businesses carrying aquatics products are asked to share the guidance with their suppliers and customers.

The guidelines can be downloaded [here](#).

Additional information on invasive species prevention and making wise pet choices to protect the environment can be found at Habitattitude.net and StopAquaticHitchhikers.org.

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About PIJAC

Founded in 1971, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) represents the experience and expertise of the responsible pet care community to legislative, regulatory, and governing bodies in order to promote animal well-being and responsible pet ownership, foster environmental stewardship, and ensure the availability of healthy pets. PIJAC members include retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, wholesale distributors, manufacturers’ representatives, pet hobbyists, and other trade organizations.