Open Letter to Federal, State & Local Government Officials Regarding Pets and COVID-19 Precautions

We in the responsible pet care community commend the swift actions you and your peers across the country are taking to protect human health and reduce the current surge in COVID-19 infection cases. As you take these critical steps to control the spread of the disease, including again directing business closures, we urge you to continue to take into account the well-being of the pets and other animals loved and cared for by the citizens in your communities.

Nearly 85 million American households own at least one pet, and 95% of pet owners consider their pets to be part of the family, according to the 2019-2020 American Pet Products Association National Pet Owners Survey. As the population faces the ongoing effects of the pandemic, including mental stress and prolonged social isolation, many people turn to their pets for comfort and companionship. The ranks of pet owners have also swelled as unprecedented numbers of people welcomed new pets into their lives over the past months.

It is vital that businesses that provide the products, services or housing necessary for pet care, and the pets themselves, are included among the critical infrastructure that is allowed to remain open.

Just as grocery stores and hospitals provide necessary sustenance and medical care to humans, pet stores that sell food, products and supplies, and businesses that offer veterinary, boarding and grooming services, must remain operational to ensure the continued humane care of companion animals.

Pet stores supply nearly one-third of all dog and cat food; that number is much higher for food required for pets like small mammals, reptiles and fish. Grocery stores generally offer only limited pet products and don’t often have the specialized food, supplements and even medications that are required to maintain the health of millions of beloved pets and animals. Experiences during the first round of regulations earlier this year show that grocery stores are not set up logistically, and alone cannot fulfill the demand, to serve ALL pets in this country.

Proper care for pets also includes veterinary care, pet boarding and grooming services. Boarding provides a reliable regimen of care for pets of essential workers and first responders. Professional pet grooming offers essential preventative care, keeping pets’ skin, ears and nails healthy and avoiding infections or wounds that would require veterinary intervention – they are not “just haircuts for pets.”

We ask you to ensure that your community has the ability to provide appropriate care for the pets and animals that depend on them, and list businesses that provide for the care of pets as essential retailers that are exempt from any mandatory closures.

Pet businesses quickly adapted to operate in a responsible manner and effectively protect their customers, employees and the pets in their care during the first round of closure mandates, including
the adoption of social distancing measures, the wearing of masks and other PPE by employees, and the placement of register shields. We in the responsible pet care community are committed to helping you safeguard both human and animal health and well-being, now and always.

Sincerely,

Mike Bober, President and CEO, Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council
Steve King, CEO, American Pet Products Association
Vic Mason, President, World Pet Association
Celeste Powers, President, Pet Industry Distributors Association
Dennis Sprung, President/CEO, American Kennel Club
Steve Feldman, Executive Director, Human Animal Bond Research Institute
Dana Brooks, President and CEO, Pet Food Institute
Al Puntillo, Steering Committee Chair, Independent & Neighborhood Pet Retail Association
Kevin Cain, Director for Governmental Affairs, Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Gene O’Neill, CEO, North American Veterinary Community
Ron Phillips, Vice President, Legislative and Public Affairs, Animal Health Institute
Danelle German, President, National Cat Groomers Institute
Keryn Rod, National Director, Companion Animal Certification & Government Affairs, American Humane
Carmen Rustenbeck, CEO & Founder, International Boarding & Pet Services Association
Jeffrey Reynolds, Executive Director, National Dog Groomers Association of America
Linda Easton, Executive Director, International Professional Groomers
Patti Strand, President, National Animal Interest Alliance
George Eigenhauser, Legislative Coordinator, The Cat Fanciers’ Association

National Retailer Community:

Buzz Wheeler, CEO/Owner, Coastal Farm & Home Supply
Lindsay Mutschler, CFO, Concord Pet Foods and Supplies
Michael Seitz, CEO & Chairman, EarthWise Pet
Jeff David, CEO, Independent Pet Partners
Lars & Marisa Wulff, Co-CEOs, Mud Bay
Michael Levy, Founder and President, and Mark Witriol, Co-Owner, Pet Food Express
Laura Leah English, CEO & Co-Founder, Pet Planet USA
Chris Rowland, CEO, Pet Supplies Plus
Ron Coughlin, CEO, Petco
Joe Watson, President and CEO, Petland
Mike and Trish Elkind, Founders, and Carrie McDermott, CEO, PetPeople
J.K. Symancyk, President and CEO, PetSmart
Joe Dent, President, and Monica Pitzner, Chief Marketing Officer, Three Dog Bakery
Rob Flanagan, and Dan Remus, Co-Founder, Wag N’ Wash Natural Pet Food & Grooming
Sam Bugarsky, President & CEO, Wilco Stores
Paul Allen, Founder and CEO, Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming

Local Retailers & Supporters:
Diane Tucker, Rohnert Park, CA
Cheroane Fulmer, Business Owner, Peace Love and Pets- Grooming Salon, Placerville, CA
Cyndi Tumminia, Wagsrp LLC, Rohnert Park, CA
Bryanna Davis, Groomer, 100% Fancy Grooms, Fresno, CA
Katryn Robinson, President, Renaissance Pet Resort & Spa, Banning, CA
Rachel Bowlin, Ruff Around the Edges, Fresno, CA
Lynn Wright, Owner, Grooming by Lynn, Paso Robles, CA
Carla Ng-Garrett, Sales Manager, Earthbath, San Francisco, CA
Sally Randall, Owner, Pro-Groom, Roseville, CA
Sanchia Hendricks, Owner/operator, Canine Showcase, Sunnyvale, CA
John Jorn Owner, Shillington Aquariums, Calimesa, CA
Victoria Frank, Pet Groomer, From Wags to Whiskers Pet Salon, Waterford, CA
Thomas Leske, Owner, The Pet Wash, El Segundo, CA
Jane Bond, Owner, Eco Dog Care LA and Eco Dog Care, Los Angeles, CA
Sarah East Supervisor, Fallbrook Fertilizer, Feed & Farm Supply, Fallbrook, CA
Katie Cupps, Certified Professional Pet Groomer, Beyond Pawfection, Roseville, CA
Ashley Tilson, Salon Manager, Swaggs inc. Agoura Hills, CA
Anthony Oliveira, Owner, Groomingdales, San Mateo, CA
Monika Conrardy, Owner, Monika’s Grooming, Campbell, CA
Vincent Camilleri, Owner, All Aboard Dog Grooming, Novato, CA
Sandi Cain, Freelance Business Reporter, Sandi Cain Communications, Laguna Beach, CA
Sharon Sullivan, Owner, Neptune’s Tropical Fish, Highlands Ranch, CO
Marvin Schaffer, Owner, J & M Aquatics & Pet Center, Grand Junction, CO
Aaron Blake, Owner, Animal Attraction LLC, Greeley, CO
Deb White, CEO, Super Bird Creations, Grand Junction, CO
Julie Holmes, Brand Director, Unique Manufacturing & Marketing, Arvada, CO
Jeremy J. Petersen, Founder, President & CEO, Identity Pet Nutrition, Denver, CO
Bree Maestas, President, Pet City BAJA Inc. Colorado Springs, CO
Mark Johnson, Central Pet, Aberdeen CT, Peyton, CO
Karen Horak, Owner, Poudre Pet and Feed Supply, Fort Collins, CO
Matt Kurtz, Manager, The Fish Crew, Fort Collins, CO
Heather Thoutt, Managing Member, Elite Reef, Denver, CO
Danielle Jarock, President, Quality Paws Natural Pet Inc. Denver, CO
Heather Thoutt, Owner, Elite, Reef, Denver, CO
Sheila-Greg, Owners, Retail pet store, Denver, CO
Kim Roberts, Territory Manager, Wilson & Associates, Lakewood, CO
Laura ‘Peach’ Ried, President, Fish Mart, West Haven, CT
Robert Bray, Managing Member, House of Fins, Greenwich, CT
Katie Velie, Manager, Nahacky’s Aquarium, Melbourne, FL
Marcye Sweeney, President, Sea in the City, Orlando, FL
Sandy Moore, President, Segrest Inc. Gibsonton, FL
David Boozer, Exec. Director, FL Tropical Fish Farms Association, Winter Haven, FL
Kathryn Brady, Katsmith, Kissimmee, FL
Carla Bizzell, Owner, Mabuhay Chartreux, Pensacola, FL
David Schuler, Manager, Pet Safari Clearwater, Clearwater, FL
Angie Robinson, Bark & Park Mobile Grooming, Springfield, MA
Leanna Devaney, Employee, Best Buddy Pet Spa, Marshfield, MA
Franki Henriques, Pet Stylist, K9 Ranch Inc, Avon, MA
Emily Morelli, Pedigree Pup, Bedford, MA
Michael Hresko, VP, House of Tropicals, Glen Burnie, MD
Lyn Knight, Self, Mt Airy, MD
Celeste Powers, President, Pet Industry Distributors Association, Abingdon, MD
Laurie Coughlan, Retired, Parkville, MD
Janet D’Agostino, Secretary/Treasurer, Crab & Mallet Cat Club, Timonium, MD
Joseph Wagner, Today’s Pets, Inc., Elkridge, MD
William Unger, Owner, Scales-N-Tails. LLC, LaVale, MD
Brian O’Neill, Owner, Wet Pet & Reptile Center, LLC. Baltimore, MD
Mary Jane, Nagel, Member, St Michaels Pet Supplies LLC, St Michaels, MD
Noreen Javornik, Acupenture with Noreen, Laurel, MD
Jessica Miklasz, Passionate Paws & Claws, Crofton, MD
Kristen Wear, Owner, Bandanas Dog Grooming, LLC, Silver Spring, MD
Hollyanne Dustin, Proprietor, Feline Friends, Cat Care & Consulting, East Waterboro, ME
Luis Raya, Manager, Rawz Natural Pet Foods, York, ME
Martha Matthews, Kalamazoo Ringers, Holland, MI
Mark Smith, President, Frontier Distributing, Inc. Oxford, MI
Robert Agresta, CFA, Oxford, MI
Wendy Goldman, Owner/Operator, Howell, MI
A.L Wilson, Wynterwynd, South Haven, MI
Candice Massey, CFA, Alpena, MI
Courtney Mccord, Dotty’s, Burton, MI
Alyssa Rahmann, VP HR, Josh’s Frogs, Owosso, MI
Joshua Willard, Josh’s Frogs LLC, Owosso, MI
Karen Overholser, Pet Owner, Pine City, MN
Julie Johnson, CVT, VTS, University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center, Savage, MN
Susan Kline, Pet Owner, CFA, Burnsville, MN
Rick Berndt, Owner, Pet Zone, Bemidji, MN
Barry Benjamin, Happy Tails Pet Store, Owatonna, MN
Joseph Ferriero, Owner, You Pet’Cha, Morris, MN
Monika Hamlin, Rip Tide Aquatics, Pine River, MN
Misty Fleming, Owner, Pinnacle Vet Clinic, Neosho, MO
Melissa Cox, Owner, Ozark Valley Puppies, Neosho, MO
Susan Charles, CFA, Country Club, MO
Drew Barbes, Pet Owner, TICA, Stickton, MO
Sheila Walker, Private Owner, Waynesville, MO
Chris Fleming, Owner, Pinnacle Pet, Neosho, MO
Jill Allen, Owner, Bark 2 Basics, LLC, O’Fallon, MO
Stephanie Nuce, Co-Owner, Goode Grooming, Tracy, MO
Chase Pierce, Owner, Tail Waggers Montana, Whitefish, MT
Josh Allen, Founder, Dee-O-Gee, Bozeman, MT
Kimberly Downling, General Manager, Aquatica of Charlotte, Charlotte, NC
Jan, Beardsley-blanco, Former Breeder, New London, NH
Patrick Donston, President, Absolutely Fish Inc, Clifton, NJ
Jane Cagney, Owner, TLC Mobile Grooming, Chester, NJ
Kate Preston, Just So Persians, Union, NJ
Warren, Van Varick, Owner, Sea Level Aquarium, Pinebrook NJ
Vincent Sheehan, Owner, Pet Concepts LLC DBA Katie’s Pet Depot, North Brunswick, NJ
Rick Dunnahoo, VP Sales & Marketing, Clifford W. Estes CO, Fairfield NJ
Bill Loesch, Owner, All About Pets, LLC, Sea Grit, NJ
Elizabeth White, Cat Fanciers Association, Inc. Albuquerque, NM
Ricardo Annese, Owner, Lassy Canines Spa & Salon, Las Cruces, NM
Marshello Arnold, Owner, Pretty Pooch & Kitty Too!, Farmington, NM
Barry Berman, President, NexPet Retailer Co-op, New York, NY
Alan Cohen, President/CEO, Blue Ribbon Pet Products, Inc. Bohemia, NY
Jim Siedwand, President, Pet World & Aqua Shoppe, Rochester, NY
Debra Weiner, CFA, Williamsville, NY
Ed Duncan, President, Eddie’s Aquarium Centre Inc. Cohoes, NY
Tom Bush, Owner, Cold Blooded PlayThings, Rocky Point, NY
Tyler Smith, Manager, Jungle Bob’s Reptile World, Selden, NY
Karen Congero, Owner, Style A Dog, LLC, St Thomas, NY
Mark Meyer, Owner, Mark’s Country Store, Springville, NY
Pat Schiek, Lucky Dogs Canine Services, Skaneateles, NY
Pilar Nalus, Owner, Trendi Pawz Grooming and Spa, Long Beach, NY
David Mare, CFA Judge, Las Vegas, NV
Ellyn Honey, CFA, Las Vegas, NV
Jeff Fausett, President, Petland Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV
Greg Harris, Owner, Blue Reef Aquatics, NV Las Vegas, NV
Kathleen Vinulan, Manager, Puppy Boutique Las Vegas Las Vegas, NV
Paulo Tomas, President & CEO, Puppy Boutique Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Shahar, Owners, Bubbie’s Store, Las Vegas, NV
Amy Mack, COO, Reptiles by Mack, Xenia, OH
John Mack, CEO, Reptiles by Mack, Xenia, OH
Kimberly Stout, President, Coastal Pet Products, Alliance, OH
Tim Norsen, VP of Sales, Vitakraft Sun Seed, Bowling Green, OH
Lorna Friemoth, Chipotle Mexican Grill, Columbus, OH
Rick Ruff, Owner, About Cats and Dogs LLC, Hudson, OH
Donna Thompson, CFA, Sebring, OH
Cynthia White-Harpe, President, For Pet’s Sake, LLC, North Ridgeville, OH
Mark George, President, Reptiles by Mack, Xenia, OH
Richard Stevenson, BRM Exotic Expo LLC, Fostoria, OH
Brett Everhart, Wholesale Manager, Reptiles by Mack, Xenia, OH
Emily Ellsworth, Owner, Pure Pet, Salem, OH
Marguerite Goodwin, Purebred Rescue and Relocation Society, Inc. Johnstown, OH
Carrie McDermott, CEO, Pet People, Worthington, OH
Ronald Keller, Owner, Captivating Canines, Westerville, OH
Julie Malesko, HR, RBM, Kettering, OH
Carolyn, Kampsula, Owner, Kam-Lu kattery, Vancouver, WA
Sharon Willard, Issaquah, WA
Shannon Randall, Manager, Farmland Pets, Silverdale, WA
Dan Ginsburg, President, Evergreen Pet Supply, Inc. Tacoma, WA
Tom Boland, President & CEO, Skagit Farmers Supply & Country Store, Burlington, WA
Terri Entler, President, Healers Petcare Inc., Vancouver, WA
Dawna Lawson, Owner, Bark N Bubbles Mobile Dog Grooming, Spokane, WA
Tracie Lindsey, Manager/Groomer, Dee’s Dog Grooming, Spokane, WA
Kari Cooners, Groomer, Canine Divine, Bellingham, WA
Brianna Larson, Owner/Professional Pet Groomer, Zoomim’ Groomin’ Spokane, WA
Lisa Brandmeier, Owner/Member, Inca's Secret Parrot Toys & Boarding, LLC, Kent, WA
Carol Olin, Owner Operator Groomer, Four Paws IIC DBA The Soapy Paw, Snohomish, WA
James Blackburn, Ownerm J&B Hobbies, Janesville WI
Jim Reiman, Owner, Tropic Waters Pet Center, Eau Claire, WI
Dawn Fuchs, Business Manager, Maranda Ent/ CoolerDog Brand, Mequon, WI
Emily Sanders, Owners, Exotic Jungle Pet Superstore, Morgantown, WV
Joe Veltri, Owner, Eastern Pet Supply Outlet, Bridgeport, WV