

What are the Small Animal Standards of Care?

The Small Animal Standards of Care are the first-ever, comprehensive set of voluntary standards for breeders and distributors of small mammals, reptiles, and birds developed by the Pet Joint Advisory Council's Small Animal Care Committee.

Why were these standards created?

Pet industry leaders, animal care experts, veterinarians, and others have worked together for more than a year to evaluate Animal Welfare Act regulations, existing animal care policies, and companion animal care best practices. The standards were created to address a gap in animal welfare – a lack of regulations surrounding birds and reptiles – and to align best practices for the care of small mammals at breeders and distributors.

What do the standards entail?

The standards are a compilation of federal Animal Welfare Act regulations, veterinary review, and existing industry best practices, with a firm grounding in science and data. Standards are divided into sections on facilities, care practices, and transport to address all stages of animal care by breeders and distributors. Guidelines for record-keeping and staffing procedures also are included. The standards also codify best practices for the care of reptiles and birds, which are not regulated under the federal Animal Welfare Act.

Who supports these standards?

PIJAC staff and the PIJAC Board of Trustees have worked closely with pet industry leaders for more than one year to create the standards.

How do these standards address the issues surrounding employees of breeders and distributors?

As an added measure of assurance within the program, two complementary programs focused on animal care by the employees of breeders and distributors accompany the introduction of the standards: A Duty of Care policy and a toll-free hotline. More information on both can be found at PIJAC.org.

How will breeders and distributors be evaluated to ensure that they are following the standards?

At this time, the program is voluntary. Program leaders anticipate that over time, the now-voluntary standards may be expanded as part of a continuous improvement process, and verification of compliance with the standards may be affirmed through third-party, independent audits.

Are there other programs available to ensure breeders and distributors are taking the correct actions to ensure the health and well-being of small animals?

The Animal Welfare Act, as well as certain state and local standards, provide guidance for proper animal care. Retailers also may require an audit be conducted of breeders and distributors with which they do business to confirm that certain standards are being met.

How many breeders and distributors do you anticipate will participate in the program?

Because the standards are voluntary, we currently do not have a projected number of participants.

Where can the standards be found?

An executive summary, as well as the full set of comprehensive SAC standards, is available online at PIJAC.org.