



March 16, 2020

### **Open Letter to Federal, State & 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 stores that sell food, products and supplies and businesses that offer veterinary and boarding services 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 number is much higher for food required by other pets like small mammals, reptiles and fish. Grocery stores that may be allowed to remain open generally only offer limited pet food options and they don't always 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 demand 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, veterinary pet diets, and a dependable facility to temporarily house pets in that community.

It should be noted that pet stores which house and care for animals, such as 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 important measures necessary to protect the most vulnerable members of our society, including 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

Al Puntillo, Steering Committee Chair, Independent & Neighborhood Pet Retail 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

Michael Levey, Founder and President, and Mark Witriol, Co-Owner, Pet Food Express

Lars & Marisa Wulff, Co-CEO's, Mud Bay

Richard Maltsbarger, President & CEO, Pet Valu & Pet Supermarket

Lindsay Mutschler, CFO, Concord Pet Foods and Supplies

Mike and Trish Elkind, Founders, and Carrie McDermott, CEO, PetPeople

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, AL

Laura Reid, President, FishMart, West Haven, CT

Cynthia Daluise, Owner, Arcadia Pets, Staten Island, NY

Luis Marquez, President/Owner, Petland, Pembroke Pines, Naples, Miami, Plantation, Davie, and Largo, FL, and Tyler, TX

John Stottele, LLC Member/Owner, The Family Puppy, Troy, Novi and Flint, MI

Stephen Benecke, Owner, Petland, Bradenton, FL

Joshua Nie, General Manager, and Jake Patel, Owner, Petland, Frisco, TX

Justin and Kayla Kerr, Owners, Puppyworld, Olympia, WA, Puppyland, Puyallup, WA and 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, 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, IA

Douglas Staley, Owner, Pet Palace of New City, New City, NY

Jonathan Dubreuil and Jeff Morton, Owners, Shake A Paw, Green Brook and Union, NJ

Dana West, The Pet Shoppe, Middletown, NJ

Mitch and Jeanea Thomson, Just Puppies Inc., Towson and Rockville, MD

Marc Jacobs, Shake A Paw, Lynbrook, NY

Mike Gonidakis, President, Citizens for Responsible Pet Ownership (CRPO)

Brad Parker, Kristen Parker and Lamar Parker, Owners, Petland, Kennesaw and Buford, GA, Summerville, SC, and Sarasota, FL

David Jacoby and Holly Hemingway, Owners, Citipups Chelsea and Citipups Village, New York, NY

Vicki and Frank Mineo, Owners, Puppies n' Love and Animal Kingdom, Phoenix, AZ

Carl Swanson, President, Petland, Chicago Ridge, Naperville and Rockford, IL  
Adam Berger, Owner, Petland, Racine, WI and Round Lake Beach, IL  
Scott Click, President, Tomlinson's Feed & Pets, Inc., Austin, TX  
Dustin Haworth, Owner, Pet City, Colorado Springs, CO  
Deb Wilson, Director of Business Development, All The Best Pet Care, Seattle, WA  
Bill Greene, General Manager, Reber Ranch Pet Supply, Pet Central Grooming & Supplies and Reber Ranch Veterinary Hospital, Kent, WA  
Andrew T. Kim, Founder & CEO, healthspot, Culver City, CA  
Carlos Munoz, President, The Perfect Puppy, North Scituate and West Warwick, RI, and Plainville, MA  
Tara and Jerry Fleming, Owners, A to Z Petshop, Orange, CT, and Yuppy Puppy, Stroudsburg, PA  
Boris Zekster, Puppy City, Brooklyn, NY, and Puppy Paws, Ozone Park, NY  
Alan Garson, Palm Beach Puppies, Boca Raton FL  
Paul Tomas, Puppy Boutique Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV  
AdreAnne and Andy Tesene, Owners, Two Bostons, Naperville, Wheaton, Burr Ridge, and Geneva, IL  
Andy G Avigdor, Owner, My Pet Market, 8 Locations AZ/CA  
Michael Baker, President/CEO, Pet Food Experts and President, Rumford Pet Express, Pawtucket, RI  
Mike Lemos, Owner, Lemos Feed & Pet Supply, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties, CA  
G. Brent Clark, Owner/President, A1 Pet Emporium, Oklahoma City, OK