

To the new Pets at Home CEO,

We are writing from Rescue Not Retail, a campaign group that raises awareness of how live animals are used in the pet trade. The group was set up last year with one main aim: to end the sale of live animals in shops.

As part of this, we have been calling for Pets at Home to stop selling animals. We wrote to the previous Pets at Home CEO, Lyssa McGowan, in December 2024 laying out this request. We did not receive a reply.

We are writing this open letter in the hope that, in your new role as CEO, you recognise the ethical costs of selling animals on the shop floor and finally act to put an end to it. We would love to work with and support you in finding an ethical and effective way to phase out animal sales, to help align Pets at Home with current animal welfare attitudes.

Pets At Home is the UK's largest pet chain. On your website, you state that you're "creating a better world for pets and the people who love them." Outside your stores, we have seen the slogan "Where pets come first" displayed in huge writing to customers.

On visits to your stores, we have seen [hamsters scurrying at the corners of their cages](#), a [fish with a wound on their skin](#), and minimum or zero enrichment for animals. But we aren't here to point out specific welfare issues in specific stores. We are here to stress that selling **any and all animals** as pets in your stores is a prevailing problem that's causing a huge amount of misery to animals.

Currently, your guidelines allow animals to be sold to anyone over the age of 18. Checks are minimal, and keeping animals on display could easily encourage impulse buying. This means that animals are seen as objects, not sentient beings.

Fish are often seen by the public as decorative objects, rather than sentient beings, but multiple [studies](#) have found that they are intelligent, can problem-solve, and even recognize themselves in photos and reflections. The prevailing myth that they have "three second memories" has been debunked many times, and being forced to swim endlessly in circles in small tanks is likely horrific for them. As you'll also be aware, it is extremely common for fish to die in pet shops.

Rabbits are highly social animals who are severely misunderstood by humans. In the wild, they live in complex communities in woods and fields, but rabbits sold as pets are often forced to live alone in inadequate housing.

Hamsters are popular among kids in your stores, but being confined to a cage has a huge and demonstrable negative impact on their wellbeing. "[Cage rage](#)" is a common phenomenon in hamsters, leading to behaviours including cage biting and excessive urination.

By selling these animals in stores, Pets At Home is adding to the [pet overpopulation crisis](#). Rescue centres across the UK are overflowing with abandoned animals, many of whom were bought by people who had no idea how much time, effort, and money it takes to look after them.

Do pets really "come first" when they are being sold as objects to humans who may or may not be equipped to meet even their basic needs?

Pets at Home does not publicise where the animals sold in stores come from. But we do know that mass breeding facilities, which keep animals in cramped and unnatural conditions, are commonly used for pet shop animals. We urge you to at least make details of where you acquire your animals public, so people can make an informed decision on whether they buy them.

Much like wild animals in circuses and puppies and kittens in pet stores, we strongly believe that selling small animals in stores will soon be a controversial thing of the past. The public is waking up to the reality that animals are beings, not things, and a number of your competitors have moved away from selling animals, including [Jollyes](#). [West Hollywood also made history](#) recently by banning the sale of almost all animals from pet shops. We believe this is the start of a new era: where animals will no longer be seen as products to be bought and sold.

We are calling on Pets At Home to do the right thing and immediately wind down animal sales in stores. Pets at Home has the Pets Foundation charity which is already implemented within the company. This could serve as a new focus: where the stores support the 'adopt don't shop' ethos through spotlighting local rescues and charities. There are far more companion animals in this world than there are homes for them, and Pets At Home has the opportunity to truly create a better world for pets by helping those who are already here find a happy ending.

We look forward to your response.

The Rescue Not Retail team

This letter is also endorsed by:

- **Chris Packham**, Naturalist, Nature Photographer, TV presenter, and Author
- **Dame Joanna Lumley**, Actor, Author, Activist, and Presenter
- **Peter Egan**, Actor and Activist
- **Lucy Watson**, TV, Influencer, and Author
- **Gail Porter**, TV personality and actor
- **Remy Gumbs**, Content Creator and Animal Adoption Advocate
- **Dale Vince**, Green Industrialist, Founder of Ecotricity, Sky Diamond and Green Britain Foundation, Chairman of Forest Green Rovers FC
- **Frank Adlington-Stringer**, Councillor and Spokesperson for Green Party of England and Wales
- **Evie Brakes**, Animal Welfare and Pet Influencer
- **Sasha Jolliffe Yasawi**, Psychologist, Political Candidate, Founder of Ethical Leadership Initiative
- **Nadia Whittome**, MP for Nottingham East
- **Dr Clifford Warwick** PGDip(MedSci) PhD CBIol CSci EurProBiol FRBSB, Biologist & Medical Scientist

Veterinary Professionals:

- **Dr Shailen Jasani**, MA VetMB MRCVS DACVECC, Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Specialist, Founder, CEO and Clinical Director of The Ralph Veterinary Referral Centre
- **Dr Marc Abraham OBE**, BVM&S MRCVS
- **Prof Andrew Knight**, BSc./BVMS, PhD (Griff.), PhD (Winch.), MANZCVS, DipECAWBM (AWSEL), DipACAW, FRCVS, PFHEA. Veterinary Professor of Animal Welfare
- **Dr Fabian George Blake Rivers** MVDr. MRCVS. GPCert(ExAP). Founder of Dready Vet
- **Dr Alice Brough**, BVM&S, MRCVS
- **Dr Serena Holmes**, Veterinary Surgeon
- **Dr Abi Charlton**, MRCVS Veterinary Surgeon, The Rabbit and Rodent Vet
- **Dr Elarna Louise Gibbs** MRCVS BSc Veterinary Surgeon
- **Dr Megan West** MRCVS BVSc OV
- **Dr Will Collins** BVMSci MRCVS
- **Dr Bolu Eso** DVM MRCVS
- **The Progressive Veterinary Association**
- **Shakira Free Miles**, RVN, BSc, Fear Free Practitioner, Campaigner, Animal Rehabber
- **Jessica Smith**, Small Animal RVN. 7445334
- **Alexa Vargas**, RVN
- **Megan Fairbrother**, RVN
- **Jodie Hartley**, RVN
- **Charlene Gunner**, RVN
- **Natasha Johnston**, RVN
- **Emma Onyejekwe**, RVN

- **Charlotte Trant**, RVN
- **Vic Haymes**, RVN
- **Jenna Ede**, RVN
- **Lorna Hewlett**, RVN
- **Leigh Prior**, RVN

Animal Rescues:

- **Britt Ashton**, Founder of **Collective Animal Rescue**
- **Lindsey Wall**, Director of **Furry Potatoes CIC**
- **Chelsea Bentley**, Owner of **India's Hamster Rescue**
- **Heather Medley**, Founder and Director of **The Bunny Jackpot Foundation**
- **Charlotte McDonald**, Trustee of **Littlest Lives Rescue**
- **Shanleigh Knittel**, Founder of **Obis Operation**
- **Sandra Wiles**, Founder of **Sandy's Guinea Pig Sanctuary**
- **Melanie Bacchus**, Founder of **Bacchus Rescue Residents**
- **Jodie-Leigh Bacchus**, Animal Care Manager at **Bacchus Rescue Residents**
- **Kate E Young**, Founder of **Notions Rescue**
- **Amber Beck**, Sales Manager at **Nova Rescue**
- **Rebecca Davenport**, Assistant Manager at **Potteries Guinea pig Rescue**
- **Ursula Kuba**, Founder of **Little Floofs Micro Sanctuary** and retired exotic vet nurse
- **Laura Gamble**, Manager of **Burrowed Hearts Animal Rescue**
- **Grace Anastasia Malton-Sinagoga**, Founder of **Harrogate Pigeon Patrol**, Volunteer Rehabber at **Forest Flock Pigeon Sanctuary**, and NHS employee
- **Gareth Edwards**, CEO of **Farplace Animal Rescue Charity**
- **Ella Barlow**, Sanctuary Manager at **Noo Beginnings Sanctuary**
- **David Schlaich**, CEO of **Hopefield Animal Sanctuary**
- **Jon Beresford**, Cofounder and Trustee of **Brinsley Animal Rescue**
- **Beth Hinds**, Manager of **Ivy Dene Rabbit Rescue** and Director of **The National Rabbit Festival**
- **Shona Bithell**, Founder of **Small Haven Rabbit Rescue**
- **Mariah Madigan**, Founder of **Frankie's World Rescue**
- **Kelseigh Le Gallez**, Founder of **Hop Haven C.I.C**
- **Emma Bevan**, Administrator of **Windwhistle Warren Rabbit Rescue**
- **Karla Sheppard**, Cofounder, **Bristol Rabbit Rescue & Friends**
- **Gemma Short**, Admin, **Cavy Capers**
- **Elliott Gold**, Cofounder, **Hoppy Acre**
- **Lindsey Hill**, Founder, **Greatfield Small Animal Rescue and SPRAW, Small Pet Rodent Awareness Week**

Charities and Organisations:

- **Tiffany Key**, Cofounder of **Hamster Welfare**

- **Charlotte Smith**, Campaigns Manager at **Protect The Wild**
- **Mollie Kerr**, CEO and Founder of **Kelp Social**
- **Lynn Hart**, Director of **Animals in Mind**
- **Rebecca Lewthwaite**, Head of Individual Giving at **International Aid for the Protection and Welfare of Animals.**
- **Ayrton Cooper**, BSc Zoology, Campaigns Director at **Animal Justice Project.**
- **Thomas Hayford**, Civil Servant, Chairman of the **Disability Network (UK MOD)**
- **Angie Hamp**, Founder and Clinical Manager of **The Neuter Project** and Nurse at the **Celia Hammond Trust**
- **Laura Hellwig**, Managing Director of **Viva!**
- **Elizabeth Davenport**, MSc Animal Science, Senior Campaign Manager at **Animal Aid**
- **Natalie Harney**, Companion Animal Campaigns Manager at **Naturewatch Foundation**
- **Isabelle Rineau**, Founder of the **BaBBA Campaign**
- **Laura Walton**, Co-director of **Freedom For Animals**
- **Val Green MBE**, Founder of **Help Animals UK** and **Small Pet Rodent Awareness Week**
- **Peter Kemple Hardy**, Director of Campaigns at **World Animal Protection**
- **Elaine Toland**, Director, **Animal Protection Agency**

Behaviour Professionals:

- **Jade Nicholas** CAB
- **Jessica Hyams** BSc Biological Sciences (Hons) Biomedicine & Zoology, PG Cert Canine & Feline Nutrition, Certified Animal Behaviourist