



Petco To Offer Rabbits Only Through Adoption By Early 2009

Petco announces its plans to work with animal-welfare agencies and rescue groups to help adopt out rabbits.

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By early 2009, Petco will phase out selling rabbits in its stores and will work with local rabbit groups to adopt out rabbits.

Petco is reaching out to animal-welfare agencies and local rescue groups in an effort to expand its in-store rabbit adoptions. The national pet store chain, which is based in San Diego, California, disclosed plans earlier this week to phase out the sale of rabbits from its stores and, by early 2009, offer rabbits only through adoption.

“Moving to an all-adoption approach with rabbits is the right thing to do,” Petco CEO Jim Myers said in a statement released Monday. “We believe it’s good for the animals, good for our business and is consistent with our ‘Think Adoption First’ philosophy in which we encourage prospective pet parents to consider adopting an animal rather than purchasing one.”

In recent years, about a third of the company’s nearly 950 stores have offered neutered rabbits for sale. At the same time, Petco has also worked with rabbit groups to provide in-store rabbit adoptions. The company said it already has strong relationships with about 70 rabbit groups, including the Minnesota Companion Rabbit Society, the Oregon Humane Society, the Animal Rescue League of Boston, San Diego House Rabbit Society and California’s Escondido Humane Society, among others.

Now that Petco plans to nix the sale of rabbits, the company is inviting other humane societies and rabbit rescues to offer adoptions through its stores.

“We’d like to invite more — anywhere that it hasn’t been done already — and we’re asking our stores to go out and create those relationships,” said Lisa Epstein, Petco spokeswoman.

In its partnership with local rescue groups, Petco said it will:

Provide habitat housing for adoptable rabbits in its stores.

Care for adoptable rabbits as part of the company’s animal-care procedures to feed and monitor animals housed in Petco stores.

Assist with the adoption of any relinquished rabbits in need of a forever home.

Petco already offers cats and dogs through adoption only. Epstein noted that rabbits are the third most popular companion animals behind cats and dogs, and are the third most relinquished animals, also behind cats and dogs.