



Texas SPCA Asks Petco To Return Rescued Animals

Petco is returning rescued animals it planned to help find homes for at the request of the SPCA of Texas.

By The SmallAnimalChannel News Division

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Isabelle Francais/BowTie Inc.

Hamsters are among the group of 1,500 rescued small animals that Petco is returning to the Texas SPCA.

Petco is returning 1,500 exotic animals to the SPCA of Texas. The animal welfare group has changed its mind about placing the rescued animals in Petco stores for adoption.

The animals at issue were seized during the December 2009 raid of U.S. Global Exotics, an Arlington, Texas-based animal wholesaler. More than 26,000 animals were reportedly removed from the facility, where they were allegedly kept in inhumane conditions.

In a hearing following the raid, the city of Arlington was granted custody of the animals, which were then transferred to the SPCA of Texas. Wild Rescue Inc. of Lewisville, Texas, received 2,000 of the animals to place.

Petco agreed to work with Wild Rescue Inc. to place all 2,000 of the animals. On Feb. 9, 2010, 1,500 of the animals, which include small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, became available for adoption at select Petco stores in Texas. Now, the SPCA has called off the deal.

SPCA spokeswoman Maura Davies said Petco had asked for custody of the animals — a move that would have violated an agreement between the SPCA and Wild Rescue Inc.

“The agreement stated that Wild Rescue Inc. would be the group that would facilitate the adoptions,” Davies said. “And it was that process that Petco wanted to take that violated the agreement.”

The SPCA also wanted to avoid the perception that the animals were being placed back into the pet trade, she said.

“It was our intent from the very beginning that the animals would not go back into the pet business,” Davies said.

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Petco spokeswoman Lisa Epstein said the San Diego-based retailer had requested custody of animals to make the adoption process more efficient. If Petco had custody, then it would be able to approve adoptions rather than making Wild Rescue Inc. representatives come out to the stores for each adoption, she explained.

Epstein said Petco never received custody of the animals, and after the SPCA raised its concerns, it agreed to never take custody. To further dispel perception concerns, Petco also offered to waive a nominal adoption fee, which would have gone to the Petco Foundation, she said. Still, the SPCA nixed Petco and Wild Rescue Inc.'s plans.

“Every concern that they had over not wanting to work with us we tried to address and overcome with them,” Epstein said. “We thought this was absolutely a situation that could be fixed, but they held tight to their decision to remove the animals from our stores.”

Epstein said Petco is “extremely disappointed” over the SPCA’s decision.

“We really think that the animals would’ve had the best chance of finding good pet parents much faster in our stores than any other way,” she said.

All of the animals were expected to be returned to the SPCA of Texas by February 12, 2010, at the latest. Davies said the SPCA will continue to work with Wild Rescue Inc. and other groups to find homes for all of the animals seized from U.S.



Global Exotics.

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