

A NEW CORPORATE SPONSOR SUPPORTS THE AFA

By Benny J. Gallaway, President
American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.



As I will discuss below, I am pleased and excited to announce the addition of PETCO Foundation, Inc. (PETCO) to the list of Corporate Sponsors of the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. (AFA). Historically, many large pet chain stores handling birds have been generally viewed in low esteem regarding their care and treatment of the birds in their stores. While these views may have once had merit, are they appropriate today? I request that you carefully consider the following and I will use PETCO as my example. First, they have hired avian veterinarians in corporate positions and given these persons the express charge to raise the standards of the industry regarding the care of birds in their care. These individuals have developed a "PETCO Standards of Excellence" protocol which defines in very specific terms what they require from bird vendors that expect to do business with PETCO. They have patterned this program after the Model Aviculture Program or MAP.

They require that every associate in their stores that work with animals to complete a basic course in animal care and education. If they pass this course, they then qualify, to take additional coursework leading to a "Certified Animal Specialist" title. They are given this title only if they successfully complete the rigorous and demanding training course. They also provide advanced training in hand-feeding baby birds. Any of their stores that carry unweaned birds must have at least three qualified hand-feeders on-hand prior to the arrival of any unweaned birds at that store. It is their policy that no bird will be sold before it is fully weaned, is eating on its own, and has demonstrated the ability to maintain its body weight prior to going home with a new pet parent. (For more detail about this program see the companion article by Dr. Edling.)

PETCO has also recognized and has concerns about the potential number of unwanted pet birds in the United States. In response to this concern, they have developed an unprecedented program called "Think adoption first!" They actually encourage people to think about adopting a free bird from available adoption sources rather than purchase one of their birds. They then assist the customers in finding a

suitable avian companion from a facility in their area. Each store has a program to facilitate adoption of a previously-owned bird rather than buying a PETCO bird.

PETCO is also working with cage manufacturers to set new standards for the pet bird industry and to improve bird foods used in their stores. Again, for more detailed information, see Dr. Edling's letter to the AFA below. I believe it is clear that large pet stores, like PETCO, are setting new standards—standards that are unprecedented in the protection they provide to the birds and other animals in their care.

In our discussion and visits with PETCO at their San Diego Headquarters, we have found them to be an enlightened company, one that shares many of the tenets embraced by the AFA. I am therefore, as noted earlier, pleased and excited to be able to announce that they have formally committed to sponsoring and working with the AFA in educational programs designed to benefit birds. As a first step, the PETCO Foundation, Inc. has provided financial support in publishing this issue of the Watchbird. We envision other exciting cooperative activities in the near future. I ask each of you to step forward and join me in welcoming PETCO as a Corporate Sponsor of the AFA.

Letter From Dr. Thomas Edling, PETCO Animal Supplies, Inc.

I would like to take this opportunity to express how excited we are here at PETCO Animal Supplies, Inc. to be working with the American Federation of Aviculture. I have been a member of AFA for close to 10 years, either in a corporate position or as a private veterinarian. I attended my first conference in Fort Myers several years ago and have been fortunate enough to attend several conferences since that time.

Since joining PETCO almost two years ago, I have been actively involved in trying to raise the standards for the entire pet industry and joining forces with the AFA is an enormous step in the right direction, especially for our feathered friends. The AFA and PETCO share many of the

same goals, ideas and ideals such as educating the pet public, the pet industry and government officials. In addition, we are both concerned about the welfare and humane care of all birds, and promote the establishment of high standards of avian care. We also support the public's right to purchase and keep birds as companions in a responsible manner.

One of the major accomplishments we have made in the past few years is the establishment of the "PETCO Standards of Excellence" a program that outlines, in exacting details, what we expect from all our bird vendors. Our avian Standards of Excellence program uses many of the requirements outlined in the Model Aviculture Program. This Standards of Excellence program is the only one of its kind being used in the pet industry today and will certainly help raise the bar for all pet retailers, helping to stop unethical people from selling animals to the unsuspecting public.

Our two organizations also share a similar philosophy regarding training. We provide all of our associates with different levels of training depending on their current skill level. Every PETCO associate that works with animals must complete a basic course in animal care and education and if they qualify, they are given the opportunity to become a Certified Animal Specialist once they complete additional training. The training is comprehensive and demanding. In addition to our standard training programs, we have additional advanced training in hand-feeding birds. Any store that carries unweaned birds must have a minimum of three (3) qualified hand feeders prior to the arrival of any unweaned birds at the store. We have developed our own comprehensive hand-feeding training program that involves a manual with pictures to demonstrate the procedures, as well as a hands-on program that requires the new hand-feeder to actually work with several birds throughout their hand-feeding and weaning stages to ensure they are qualified to handle this enormous responsibility. The hand-feeders are certified by our Regional Companion Animal Specialists, who are responsible for the animals in each of their stores. It is also a PETCO policy that we will not sell any bird before it has been fully weaned and has demonstrated its ability to sustain its body weight prior to going home with a new pet parent. This is obviously in place to ensure that no bird will go to a new home before it can already eat on its own. We also encourage all new pet parents to come by their PETCO store during the hand feeding and weaning process to learn how to hand-feed their own bird. This serves two main purposes. First, it gives the new owner time with the bird and aids in their bonding process. Second, it helps the new owner learn and understand how to correctly hand-feed their bird in case the need ever arises. We are all concerned with the growing number of unwanted pet birds in the United States and to that end we have recently announced a new adoption program at PETCO. This adoption program supplements the already tremendously successful dog and cat adoption program in every PETCO store across the nation. Our dog and cat adoptions,

in conjunction with Petfinder.com, are responsible for adopting over 1.3 million dogs and cats over the past few years. Our new program, entitled "Think Adoption First," adds all other species of animals to our adoption program but, just as importantly, we instruct all of our associates to ask every customer who shows an interest in purchasing any animal to considered adopting before buying. That is correct, we would rather the customer adopt an animal from any one of the large number of local shelter or adoption partners than acquire the animal from our store. To that end, we provide every store with a Think Adoption First Resource Center, which has current information about the adoptable animals in their area. This includes dogs, cats, birds, reptiles, small mammals and even farm animals! Some of our stores even have computer terminals to aid in their search. This database is linked with the Petfinder.com national database to help the customers find the perfect pet to add to their family.

We have been working with several birdcage manufacturers to set new standards for the industry. We are happy to announce that in the very near future, the smallest birdcage we will carry for sale in any of our stores will be approximately 18" X 18" X 18" and will be designated as a budgerigar cage with proper bar width and perch sizes. Other cages for larger birds will be even bigger. Once again, this is a new standard for the pet industry that we hope other pet retailers will follow.

The last thing I will discuss is our new bird foods. Working with Kaytee Products, Inc. we developed a food for use in our stores, which combined a pelleted diet with a high quality seed mixture. The food was designed to help birds that were not accustomed to eating a pelleted diet maintain their caloric intake on seeds while transitioning over to the more nutritious pellets (our birds are also offered fresh vegetables and fruits on a regular schedule). The food worked out so well that Kaytee decided to offer it to the public as their new "Fusion" diet. Our other new bird food is under development by Sun Seed and Quicko as a transition diet for birds when they initially arrive in our stores and when they first go home with their new pet parents. The food will be highly palatable and nutritious. It should help to alleviate many of the stress induced problems associated with birds in new environments.

Once again, I want to emphasize how thrilled we are at PETCO to be associated with such an outstanding organization as the AFA. We look forward to a long lasting and fruitful relationship. I hope to see many of you at the next AFA convention in Miami!!

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Edling, DVM, MSpVM
National Director, Veterinary Medicine
PETCO Animal Supplies, Inc ■

Insectivorous Feast already helping endangered species

Tony Blackler, from the UK, has been having trouble raising Bali starlings to maturity. But as soon as he used *Insectivorous Feast* he produced his first fully weaned chick.

We are particularly pleased with this since Tony is the only UK breeder to have had this product prior to its launch!

Insectivorous Feast is a low iron product containing all the unique nutrients of our other Feast products including the health promoting Flourish herbs.

Another innovative product from The Birdcare Company that really makes a difference.



photo: Tony Tilford

Your Insectivorous Feast is a real winner with my birds. Even species that don't normally eat softfoods are loving it. Phil Bailey.

My Mali Firefinches love your new Insectivorous Feast. Ian Hinze.

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Leading the way - naturally

The Birdcare Company is a commercial member of the AFA

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Bird Zone, Pineville, NC birdzone@mindspring.com
Birdlady's Babes, Atascadero, CA birdlady@calinet.com
Birds Of A Feather, Hershey, PA
Birds Of Paradise, Spring, TX
Blue Mountain Bird Farm, New Ringold, PA
Brinsea Products Inc, Titusville, FL www.brinsea.com
Canopy Scientific, Acworth, GA
Cele Birds, Manor, TX celebids@aol.com
China Prairie Company, Redway, CA
Corners Limited Inc, Kalamazoo, MI
Crystal Parrot #2090, Southampton, MA www.crystalparrot.com
Cuttlebone Plus, San Marcos, CA cuttleboneplus@earthlink.net
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Expandable Habitats, Rockton, IL
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Faunalink Foundation, Plant City, FL www.faunalink.org
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Fur And Feather Ranch, Pismo Bench, CA
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Hidden Forest Art Gallery, Fallbrook, CA www.gaminiratnavira.com
Hill Country Aviaries, LLC, Dripping Springs, TX
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I Believe I Can Fly Aviary, Eatonville, WA workingbird@msn.com
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Magnolia Bird Farm, Anaheim, CA
Nat'l Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD www.swetsblackwell.com
NC Zoological Park Library, Asheboro, NC
Nestbox Creations, Sparks, NV nora@sdi.net
North State Animal & Bird Hospital, Jackson, MS
Old World Aviaries, Austin, TX www.oldworldaviaries.com
Omar's Exotic Birds, Lake Forest, CA
Owen Feather Co, Tumacacori, AZ
Parrot Mountain & Garden, Pigeon Forge, TN
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Parrot Perch Aviaries, Las Vegas, NV parrotperch@aol.com
Parrots Of The World, Rockville Centre, NY
Pippin's Roost Exotics, Fallbrook, CA
Polyperch, Tomball, TX george@houston.w.com
Pretty Bird Int'l, Inc, Stacy, MN jen@prettybird.com
Queen's Pride Aviary, Kendalia, TX pionus@gvtc.com
R & M Aviaries, Hunlock Creek, PA
Rain Forest Exotics Inc, Conroe, TX www.rainforestexotics.com
Rolf C Hagen (USA) Corp, Mansfield, MA
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Shady Wings Aviary, Belleview, FL
Simply Parrots, North Carver, MA lorriemccarthy@earthlink.net
Southwick Wild Animal Farm Inc, Mendon, MA
Sugarcreek Bird Farm Inc, Bellbrook, OH
Tangy Design, San Jose, CA www.tangydesign.com
The Bird Shoppe, Fairfield, OH
The Birdbrain, Carbondale, CO
The Gabriel Foundation, Carbondale, CO
The Higgins Group Corp., Miami, FL www.higginsgrp.com
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Wings N' Whiskers, Valrico, FL www.wingsnwhiskers.com
Woody's Bird Farm, Dover, PA
Wyl'd's Wingdom, Inc, Norfolk, VA www.wingdom.com
ZuPreem, Mission, KS www.zupreem.com