

New California Pet Store Standards

The Pet Store Animal Care Act sets requirements covering everything from caging to animal handling to enrichment in every pet store selling live companion animals, including reptiles and fish.

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California pet stores, such as Reptiles Unlimited in Long Beach, have new standards in 2009. Photo courtesy Eric Syverson. California pet stores begin 2009 with new standards. An industry initiative to provide clearer guidelines for pet stores and animal-control officers takes effect Jan. 1.

Called the Pet Store Animal Care Act, California Assembly Bill 1347 sets requirements covering everything from caging to animal handling to enrichment in every pet store selling live companion animals, including reptiles and fish, in the state.

Some new recordkeeping requirements stand to benefit customers. Stores must note information such as veterinary treatment records and who provided them with the animals, and they must supply it upon request to people purchasing individually housed animals. Pet stores are also responsible for either providing an animal-return policy at the time of sale or informing customers about no returns.

The new law also sets some operating standards. Stores must establish and maintain a documented animal-care program in consultation with a licensed veterinarian, and they must make written animal-husbandry procedures available to all employees.

According to the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, which helped craft the bill, many pet stores are already operating within the scope of most of these criteria. But for stores without the required written procedures, spokeswoman Kari Ardolino Rudgers said PIJAC has developed guidelines regarding what the law covers, including sample checklists and forms. One free copy has been mailed to independent retailers in California, she said, and additional copies and a Microsoft Word version on CD are available for sale at pijac.org.