



For Immediate Release

Contact: Leah Elwell

[406-223-0217//info@stopais.org](mailto:info@stopais.org)

Calling all Pet Stores to Unite on Don't Let it Loose

Invasive species discovery shines a light on the need for continued nationwide prevention

Livingston, MT. March 10, 2021 – A recent discovery of a widely distributed aquarium pet product harboring invasive zebra mussels has highlighted the importance of responsible pet ownership to prevent the spread of invasive species. The mussel-contaminated aquarium moss ball product was found in multiple pet stores nationwide prompting voluntary recalls by chain stores such as PetCo. If this product were disposed of improperly, it could introduce a highly damaging invasive species. Ensuring that aquarium owners never dump their tanks into natural waters and dispose properly of their contents is the goal of the Don't Let it Loose program.

Don't Let it Loose informs pet owners on the risks of releasing unwanted pets into the wild and promotes rehoming of unwanted pets. The partnership with independent pet retailers has been a critical and primary way to encourage responsible pet ownership and the Don't let it Loose message.

"Pet stores and their staff are an important link in sharing information about responsible pet ownership and invasive species", says Leah Elwell of Invasive Species Action Network. "The simplicity of the Don't Let it Loose message makes it clear that releasing pets into the wild is not an option".

Don't Let it Loose began partnering with independent pet stores in 2013 largely in western United States, but the program has applicability for pet stores nationwide. There are examples of aquarium dumping incidents that have led to the establishment of invasive species in natural waterways. Aquarium contents are not the only thing that can become a problem; reptiles, invertebrates and other plants can become invasive if released in the right (wrong) environment.

For pet stores that may have moss ball products on their shelves, Elwell recommends protecting display tanks from contamination and dispose of products by following these [guidelines](#) or reach out to your state wildlife or agriculture agency for more guidance.

"We welcome new pet stores to partner on this important issue. The more voices that can share the Don't Let it Loose message help create informed pet owners", states Elwell. Pet stores that would like to join in the Don't Let it Loose effort can reach out to Invasive Species Action Network for more information.

Don't Let it Loose is a program of the national non-profit organization Invasive Species Action Network in collaboration with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Invasive Species Action Network was founded in 2008 in Livingston, MT.