



NJ COALITION OF RESPONSIBLE PET STORES

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate Release

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Well-known Animal Rights Extremist Targets New Jersey Pet Stores

Thursday, August 22, 2019 –The New Jersey Coalition of Responsible Pet Stores has discovered a well-known animal rights extremist targeting New Jersey pet stores earlier this month. Coalition store owners documented this individual in six area pet stores in a misguided undercover operation. Clearly, the animal extremist community is not satisfied to engage in an honest debate in the public forum about our stores and has now stooped to the lowest form of harassment.

Although the alleged undercover extremist is believed to be born in Houston, Texas as Christopher Parrett, he has legally changed his name multiple times and uses a variety of aliases, including John Knoldt, Jason Smith and Chris Paxton, as well as the more well-known alias, “Pete” that was used in several documentaries produced by animal rights supporters.

“The extremist who visited our stores has been documented wearing fake mustaches, goatees and other disguises in order to mask his identity,” said Cindy Knowles, co-owner of Furrylicious Pet Boutique in Whitehouse Station. “He even attempted to disguise his identity while visiting our Coalition Stores, but our security experts were easily able to identify him.” While he previously focused largely on Midwest agriculture businesses, New Jersey pet stores seem to be a part of his financiers’ next target. This extremist is not known to fund his own “investigations” and has likely been hired by a known animal extremist organization. Pictures from Coalition members’ security cameras are attached.

“Pet stores that sell puppies in New Jersey have been under relentless attack from groups like the Humane Society of the United States, the Missouri Alliance for Animal Legislation, and local activists who seek to shut down our well-regulated and inspected businesses and put more than one hundred dedicated employees out of work,” said Jeff Morton, the owner of Shake A Paw Pet Store in Union Township. “The New Jersey Coalition of Responsible Pet Stores will continue to push back against these activists and their emotionally-charged false depictions of our stores by challenging them with the truth in public testimony, publishing facts about our operations, and exposing poorly arranged undercover operations.”

“This is a pure harassment campaign designed to intimidate our employees and store owners, and an opportunity for animal extremists looking to fabricate a reality that does not exist,” said Dana West, owner of The Pet Shoppe in Middletown. “We fully expect to see poorly edited video and audio to be released in an effort to harm our businesses. Having failed in repeated legislative attempts to ban our businesses, animal rights extremists have now resorted to the lowest of all scams. We look forward to sharing our own videos and audio clips of “Pete’s” visits to document the expected misrepresentations fabricated by “Pete” and his funders.”

The Coalition anticipates that this is just the beginning of a renewed campaign of protest through the media and demonstrations targeting member stores. “These ‘undercover’ operations are common tactic used by animal rights extremists,” said Jon Dubreuil, owner of Shake A Paw Pet Store in Green Brook. “We have no doubt that these attempts to infiltrate our stores will be used to try to generate public support by playing into our society’s deep love for animals, but extremists have no interest in speaking the truth.”

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New Jersey Pet Stores are inspected yearly by both local and state health departments, among other government agencies. Enforcement of all applicable laws is conducted by the Division of Consumer Affairs within the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety overseen by the New Jersey Attorney General. “While state law requires veterinary examination every two weeks for pet store puppies, our veterinarians are on-site a minimum of every seven days to ensure the health of each puppy,” said Stephanie Earl, co-owner of Furrylicious Pet Boutique in Whitehouse Station. “New Jersey has the strongest consumer protection laws in the nation and requires the reimbursement of up to twice an animal’s purchase price for medical expenses should one of the dogs we sell become sick or a hereditary condition is uncovered.”

Every puppy in Coalition stores is obtained from licensed breeders inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture with near perfect inspection histories, consistent with New Jersey’s nation-leading Pet Purchase Protection Act. Animals bred in unregulated puppy mills are already banned from sale in New Jersey.

“It is time that lawmakers take this threat seriously,” said Yoly Parra, owner of Fashionable Pets in Paramus. “These extremists are purposely targeting Coalition stores because we confront their distortions and outright lies head-on to protect our businesses and consumer choice about where to get a family pet. The extremist community will not accept the truth about our commitment to animal welfare and, as we just experienced, they will go to any length in an effort to close our stores.”

The Coalition is using this incident as a training opportunity for staff. Coalition stores have scheduled training with communications and security experts to explore appropriate interactions with animal rights activists who visit our member stores. “These incidents made us all realize that advance training is essential for addressing security threats,” said Lacie Hyde, owner of Bark Avenue Puppies in Red Bank. “Proper planning is needed to prevent potentially dangerous confrontations between our employees and extremists. The animal activist groups are seeking to exploit any misstatements by our younger employees and to bait them into agreeing to unfounded claims of animal abuse.”

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The New Jersey Coalition of Responsible Pet Stores is a group of small business owners who share a passion to connect families with the perfect puppy to ensure a lifelong fit and commitment. Whether suffering from allergies and need a hypo-allergenic dog, live in a small home or condo and have size limitations, or want a large breed dog in need of room to run, Coalition Pet Store members can fill the need. The Coalition works with only select breeders who pass rigorous, unannounced inspections by the United States Department of Agriculture, state and local inspections, as well as stricter requirements pursuant to New Jersey law, and far more stringent individual requirements of store owners. To put it simply, animal welfare is paramount to Coalition member operations and guides each and every decision made.



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Security Camera Screenshots of Activist

