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Mice and Fish Rescued from Petco During Animal Liberation March in San Francisco

While hundreds rallied in support of the right to rescue animals from abuse, a few activists delivered "feeder" mice and suffering betta fish to safety



Activists carry four mice and one betta fish out of the San Francisco Petco on 16th Street in what they call an "open rescue." (Credit: Direct Action Everywhere)

VIDEO AND PHOTOS

(Credit: Direct Action Everywhere)

June 10, 2023, San Francisco, CA - On Saturday afternoon, during the Animal Liberation March in San Francisco, as throngs of people from around the country demonstrated their support for the right to rescue animals from distress and exploitation, a small group of activists performed an open rescue of four mice and one betta fish from the Petco store on 16th Street. The so-called "feeder" mice are normally sold to be victims of live feeding by snakes kept as companion animals, a practice widely discredited as unnecessary and inhumane, while Petco's mistreatment

of betta fish has been well documented and challenged by animal advocates for years. The rescuers who are experienced in animal handling say they are bringing the mice and fish to receive veterinary care and then to be welcomed into loving homes.

As seen on Facebook livestream, the boisterous and colorful Animal Liberation March included speakers, smoke flares, drummers, dancers, and chanters. It was a highlight of the 2023 Animal Liberation Conference being hosted this week by the UC Berkeley chapter of Direct Action Everywhere (DxE).

Activists say that Petco's official communication tries to hide the fact that they sell live feeder mice, but that multiple employees at this San Francisco Petco have confirmed the live mice are commonly sold to be fed to predators. Additionally, activists say the mice sold by Petco survive only a short time compared with their natural lifespan, are often housed in unsanitary conditions, and often experience a protracted and terrifying death. Betta fish sold at Petco come from overcrowded, usually filthy breeding factories, where many suffocate during the pre-shipping sorting process; are shipped in stressful conditions and without food, resulting in high mortality and illness rates; and are then confined in tiny bowls without filtration or heat as they await purchase at the chain stores.

"I'm glad for these mice and fish who will finally get the care they deserve," said activist Celeste Esser, one of the animal rescuers. "The pet trade neglects their needs and treats them like decorations or live bait. As a society, we can do better than this and recognize animals' rights."

"Rescuing animals from situations of distress or exploitation should never be a crime," said Paul Darwin Picklesimer, lead organizer of the march and an animal cruelty investigator who was tried and acquitted last October for their role in saving the lives of two debilitated piglets on a Smithfields Foods farm in Utah. "The real crimes are committed by these multi-billion-dollar animal exploitation industries that torture animals, exploit workers, and degrade the environment.

"San Francisco passed a resolution to support the right to rescue in June of 2020," Picklesimer added, "and we're marching to celebrate that and to call on the rest of the nation and the world to follow suit and help animals everywhere escape the horrors of being treated as property under the law."

Investigators with Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) enter farms, slaughterhouses, and other facilities to document abuses, and to rescue sick and injured animals. DxE's investigatory work has been featured in The New York Times, WIRED, and a brutal mass pig killing exposé. DxE activists have been subjected to FBI raids and felony prosecutions for their investigative work. In 2022, DxE activists won the first acquittal in an open rescue case. DxE led the 2019 grassroots

effort to ban fur products in California and the 2021 effort to transition Berkeley city purchases to 100% plant based foods. Visit DxE on Facebook, Twitter and at directactioneverywhere.com.

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