



## **Memorandum in Support of H7334 Prohibiting the retail sale of parrots from breeders or brokers**

World Animal Protection, an international animal protection organization with members in Rhode Island, strongly supports H7334, prohibiting the sale of parrots sourced from breeders or brokers in pet stores.

Right now, tens of thousands of parrots are sitting in barren warehouses and barns, waiting to be shipped to pet stores in the US. Overwhelmed bird sanctuaries and rescues are in crisis, inundated with requests from people who want to give up their parrots. **H7334 is urgently needed to protect parrots from cruelty and alleviate the pressure on sanctuaries and rescues.**

### **Restricting the Retail Sale of Birds Protects Consumers and Animals**

#### **Cruel Bird Mills**

Direct-from-breeder sales and adoptions are more transparent and traceable than pet stores. Birds sold in pet stores come from massive breeding facilities called mills. Like in puppy mills, birds bred for the pet industry are held in rows of desolate cages, sometimes in the freezing cold or searing heat. Many of the biggest bird mills are in Oklahoma and Texas, where thousands of parrots are held in massive barns and warehouses.

Mills tear baby parrots from their parents prematurely to induce reproduction in the adults. The people tasked with caring for these fragile babies are rarely trained in proper handling. Hand-reared baby parrots can develop psychological problems and may starve, be injured, or die if they're fed improperly.

Some of the most exploited birds in the pet industry are parrots, specifically parakeets, cockatiels, and conures. Parakeets are the emblem of the bird trade. The budgerigar ("budgie") is the most common species of parakeet sold as pets. Budgies hail from Australia, where they fly through the grasslands and open forests. But in the US, these small, colorful parrots are bred in dirty mills and shipped to pet stores nationwide.

#### **Lack of Meaningful Federal Regulation**

The federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) ostensibly regulates bird mills. Facilities must be licensed, and US Department of Agriculture inspectors inspect facilities (though facilities can go several years without inspection). The AWA has been consistently criticized for setting minimal welfare



requirements and chronic underenforcement. Instead of shutting down licensees violating the law, the USDA often issues only [paltry fines](#)—or [does nothing](#) at all.

For example:

- In 2024, the USDA [inspected](#) a parakeet mill in Oklahoma and found birds held in a barn with a heat index of 110 degrees. Inspectors found multiple dead birds, while others—panting and unable to stand—were close to death. The mill continues to operate today.
- An [undercover investigation](#) of three large, USDA-licensed bird mills that supply pet stores nationwide found:
  - Thousands of birds confined in tiny cages covered in feces and dust.
  - Birds left vulnerable to the elements, enduring blistering heat in the summer and freezing cold in the winter, with little or no protection.
  - A mill owner admitting to suffocating birds in a plastic bag.
  - A garbage bin overflowing with dead birds and severed body parts.

**As a result, Rhode Island residents cannot be diverted to unscrupulous sources because there is no meaningfully regulated market for birds in the US.** Pet stores increase risks for consumers by acting as shields for the cruelty that occurs behind closed doors, often thousands of miles away.

In contrast, adoptions and direct-from-breeder sales allow consumers to know the animal’s story and ask questions. Small-scale breeders will usually meet people face-to-face and likely interview prospective purchasers. Further, online breeders are regulated to the same extent as breeders who sell to pet stores under the AWA, so prohibiting pet store sales does not make online purchases more unsafe or unregulated.

### **Pet Stores Are Thriving in Communities with Bird Retail Bans**

Bird sales make up a minuscule fraction of the pet industry. Pet stores in cities with bans on the sale of live animals, such as Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, MA, are thriving by focusing on supplies, grooming, training, and boarding. Retail sales bans encourage families to consider adoption before purchasing, an ethos in line with Rhode Island’s commitment to animal protection. Instead of selling animals from unregulated or poorly regulated commercial breeding facilities, pet stores showcase birds who need loving homes.

H7334 would protect parrots from cruelty and unsuspecting consumers from purchasing an animal they are ill-equipped to care for. World Animal Protection respectfully urges favorable consideration of this bill.

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