



NEWS RELEASE

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**DISTRICT ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES “GREENWASHING”
SETTLEMENTS WITH CHEWY, PETCO, PETSMAART, AND TARGET**

Fresno County District Attorney’s Office announced today that their office, along with 22 other District Attorney’s Offices in California, resolved “greenwashing” cases with the following companies: Chewy, Inc.; PetSmart LLC; Petco Animal Supplies, Inc.; and Target Corporation. These cases were based on allegations that these companies sold pet waste bags and other plastic products to California residents that were labeled with misleading environmental claims, including claims regarding their biodegradability, in violation of California law.

“Greenwashing” refers to deceptive marketing claims that mislead consumers into believing that a product has certain environmental benefits over other similar products. As the public becomes more aware of pervasive plastic pollution in our environment, consumers are often willing to pay a premium for products that claim to be environmentally friendly.

Certain pet waste bags are promoted as “eco-friendly” by claiming that they are biodegradable or break down more readily over time than other plastic bags. Because plastic bags holding pet waste are typically only appropriate for disposal in landfills, which are designed to *prevent* biodegradation, claims that they provide an environmental benefit by degrading over time are deceptive. For these reasons, California prohibits the sale of plastic bags (and other plastic products) labeled with claims of biodegradability or similar terms implying the plastic will degrade.

Additionally, dog and other pet waste is refused by municipal and industrial composting facilities because the resulting compost is typically used to grow agriculture crops for human consumption, and pet waste can contain harmful contaminants, such as *E. coli* bacteria. For backyard composting, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency cautions against home-composting pet waste for similar reasons. Because of this, it is deceptive to market plastic bags that are intended to contain a waste that is generally not compostable, as “compostable,” even if the bags have passed an approved compostability test.

Some marketers have also falsely promoted certain bags as “plastic-free,” when in truth, the bags are made from plastic. Retailers that promote such claims on their websites can be liable for false advertising.

Stipulated judgments were filed in the amounts of: Chewy, Inc. (\$600,000); Petco Animal Supplies, Inc. (\$375,000); PetSmart LLC (\$500,000); and Target Corporation (\$300,000), and each stipulated judgment included a court order that prohibits future similar violations.

After California prosecutors contacted the four companies regarding sales of these products, each took immediate steps to stop the sales, and cooperated with prosecutors to refine their processes to ensure ongoing compliance with the law and to reach a settlement.

The Media may email FCDAmedia@fresnocountyca.gov or at (559) 600-4442 with questions.