

PetSmart Investigation: Investigator's Log
Manchester, Connecticut

Wednesday, October 11, 2006

The reptile enclosure is disgusting. It's dirty, and all of the individual cages emit an almost unbearable stench of dead, rotting crickets. A1 said their district manager refuses to get a new enclosure because she thinks this one is fine. A1 agreed that it is dirty and hard to clean and also went on to say that they lose reptiles all the time because they can fit through some of the cracks. She said that when they had (somehow) opened up the whole thing last, they found a bunch of dead lizards and geckos on the very bottom.

Friday, October 13, 2006

I medicated, cleaned, and fed the animals in the sick and new arrivals rooms. There are shockingly unhealthy animals that need to be euthanized. There are 17 animals in total in the sick room. Most of the animals being treated have some sort of either diarrhea or wet tail. One hamster has extreme wet tail. Her left eye looks almost sealed shut. She is very shaky and can barely walk or even move. There is a very unhappy winter white hamster. She screams constantly anytime anyone comes in and just gets louder and angrier when you approach her cage. She has swollen paws and sores, and to me it seems like she also has possible mouth sores.

Saturday, October 14, 2006

A woman wanted one of the parakeets in the aviary. I watched K., a manager in training who used to work for PETCO, spend roughly 15 minutes trying to catch one of these birds. This is a terrible process. All the birds become extremely stressed and exhausted flying all around the glass enclosure. K. finally caught the parakeet the woman wanted by basically smashing it against the glass with the net. Many of these birds fall to the floor while trying to avoid the net.

A woman and her three kids brought in a hamster to return because she was sneezing and seemed to have an infection. E. asked her if she wanted a different one, and the woman said that "three hamsters in five months is enough for me—I don't think I can take another one dying."

Monday, October 16, 2006

In the fridge, there were six dead hamsters and one unlabeled bag. In the sick room were two dead hamsters. One was a short-haired hamster with a really bad case of wet tail. Poor thing. You can see on the video how bad it was for her. Her sheet said she was placed in the sick room today. I found her lying dead next to her water dish. The other was a Chinese dwarf hamster. She had been back there since July 30, 2006. Under the diagnosis portion, this is what was written: "[B]loated, crusted eyes, bloody nose, and going to vet." Well, obviously, they didn't get her to the vet fast enough. I found her lying dead under a piece of fake log in her cage.

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

As I was carrying 10 dead animals (nine hamsters and one not labeled) from the fridge to

the vet clinic, J. (manager) approached me and said, "The hamster in tank 1 died (in the sick room). You know, the little one that you said needs a vet." I sighed and went back to the sick room (J. [manager] laughed). Sure enough, she had died. Mouth and eyes wide open, except the eye that was sealed shut. She looked terrible. I again went back to Banfield (the vet office in store) to give them the deceased. The woman (vet tech, I think) initially replied, "Great, more critters." As she was putting them in the freezer, she said, "Just put them in here with all the other PetSmart critters."

Friday, October 20, 2006

I took four animals to the vet at 9:05 a.m.:

Cage 2—Short-haired hamster; conditions (also refer to chart): head-tilting and spinning in circles, also blood apparently splattered in cage, which I haven't seen yet, but it's written on her log sheet.

Cage 5—Long-haired hamster, recently had been brought back to the sick room (isolated October 17); conditions (also refer to chart): extreme wet tail, very lethargic, eyes sealed shut.

Cage 10—Honey hamster; conditions (also refer to chart): lethargic, very dehydrated, wet tail, URI, eyes crusted shut

Cage 14—Winter white hamster; conditions (also refer to chart): fight wounds (front legs), possible mouth sores, VERY UNHAPPY, and screams every time anyone comes close to her cage.

A2 came in at 1 and I advised her of the situation. She went to check on them and came back and told me that two of them did not need to see a vet—cages 10 and 14. I told her that they were very ill-looking this morning and seemed to be suffering quite a bit. She said that they are actually improving and to look at the notes on the chart. I told her I had looked at the notes on the chart, but that didn't change the fact that their current conditions were terrible. It is possible for them to get worse, even if they had previously been improving. She placed them back into the sick room without their ever being seen by the vet. The other two are still at the vet, and I haven't heard anything about their condition.

Saturday, October 21, 2006

Re the hamsters I took to the vet yesterday: Dr. B. JUST looked at the animals I took in BEFORE they opened yesterday. So, these animals in need of urgent medical attention just sat in their office for over 24 hours. A2 said what's scary is that this isn't even as bad as it's been, referring to the sick room.

Monday, October 23, 2006

Back by the sick room, I found charts for three animals sitting outside the door and these are the notes written on them: Black bear hamster (cage 3)—moved to the aviary this morning. Honey hamster (cage 10)—found dead this morning. Yes, yes, and yes, this was one of the hamsters I took to the vet on October 20 due to her having wet tail, URI, dehydration, crusty eyes, and inactive behavior. A2 brought her back to the sick room before the vet could see her and told me that since she was improving, she did not need to see the vet. WELL, OBVIOUSLY SHE DID!

Sunday, November 5, 2006

Animals just keep dying all the time, it's unbelievable. For the EXTREMELY short period of time (five minutes maximum) that I was in the sick room, I found a dead hamster. I also found a dead hamster in the new arrivals room. She was a tortoise-shell hamster. Cause of death unknown—she didn't seem to have wet tail. PetSmart is an operation of never-ending deaths; it's unbelievably disturbing.

Monday, November 6, 2006

In the sick room, I found five animals dead this morning:

Cage 5—Short-haired hamster (tan), isolated November 5 with wet tail

Cage 10—Panda hamster, isolated October 24 with wet tail

Cage 11—Honey hamster, isolated October 26 with wet tail

Cage 15—Two of the four hamsters were dead—one with wet tail, the other diarrhea.

Both isolated at 8 a.m., found dead at 7 p.m. I tried to take the hamster in cage 2 to the vet, but the hamster wasn't there. Noted on her chart that she needs vet attention immediately. She was isolated October 23 for wet tail; she is very frail and weak. If she isn't taken to the vet first thing tomorrow, this is cruelty. I sadly doubt she makes it through the night, though. There needs to be something that can be done for these animals in situations like this. You can't just wait for them to die. They're suffering! The hamster in cage 6 also needs veterinary attention for wet tail, and I wrote this on her chart. Cage 16 didn't even have a dish for water. Fifteen dead animals in the fridge today—mostly hamsters and a bearded dragon.

Thursday, November 9, 2006

I asked A2 about the sick room, and she said that it's pretty much empty now. "We have four about to die," she said. She said the others have all died. I took a box of 15 dead hamsters that were in the fridge to the Banfield freezer. Lots of dead animals in there in various bags and boxes.

Saturday, November 11, 2006

I found the long-haired hamster (cage 16) in the fridge with the winter white (cage 1). They had both died on November 10. The long-haired hamster (cage 15) died this morning. A1 had written on her chart, "7:45 a.m.—barely breathing/unresponsive/dying," and that she refused her meds. "9:15 a.m.—dead."

Monday, November 13, 2006

Big corporate visit tomorrow; spent a lot of time cleaning and dusting. Found chart for hamster (cage 16); she died this morning.

Thursday, November 16, 2006

The corporate visit on Tuesday was conducted by R.W., the district store manager. I asked A2 how it went, and she didn't give me any details—just said that it went well.

Friday, November 17, 2006

In the sick room (see chart):

Cage 1—Fancy rat

Cage 5—Guinea pig

Cage 9—Calico hamster (noted as deceased on the chart this morning; she was in the fridge)

Cage 13—Robo hamster

Cage 14—Winter white hamster still not taken to the vet, although on her chart is noted several times that her mouth sores are getting worse; she's still shaky—I noted again that she needs to see a vet.

Saturday, December 2, 2006

A2 said the bearded dragon in the NAR [new arrivals room] was force-fed today. "He's still doing like crap." I'm not sure that anyone has been trained to force-feed animals. I asked how many baby Russians survived (from the NAR), and she said, "Just one. The other two got wet tail, and the parents killed them. Well, actually, they killed one and broke the back of the other one."

Sunday, December 3, 2006

The bearded dragon died in NAR last night (I wasn't there).

Monday, December 4, 2006

I found a dead baby owl finch in the aviary (very small, smaller than a penny; had to have hatched recently, no feathers).

Thursday, December 7, 2006

In the sick room: A2 was reading some of the charts out loud and randomly said, "She's dying." I asked which one. She said, cage 17. I opened her cage and took her out. Her eyes were sealed shut; A2 said she had an upper respiratory infection (in addition to wet tail). She will not be taken to the vet because they are treating her already.

Sunday, December 10, 2006

When A1 and I were walking back from the NAR, a customer pointed out that one of the baby society finches had fallen out of the nest in the aviary and died. A1 just went in and removed his/her body. I'm not positive how long s/he had been out of the nest.

Monday, December 18, 2006

I was talking with A2 about how the majority of birdcages we sell are way too small for any birds. She said they're good for travel, but "that's about it." A2 was in the sick room mocking Geiger (cage 14) as she was screaming, saying, "I hate you, I hate you all." I took some video of hamsters who were eating another hamster in the NAR. Not sure if the hamster died and was then eaten or if she had been eaten alive. She was still warm to the touch when I found her.

Wednesday, December 27, 2006

I asked A2 about what's going on with the finches (regarding the deceased). She has no clue. Referring to the one in the treatment room, "She started having seizures" and then died. She thinks that's what may have happened to the other, instead of drowning as they

had originally thought. A2 said the other finches are OK. All the baby owl finches died—she thinks that's because it gets so cold at night.

Tuesday, January 2, 2007

[We received] an e-mail from N. stating there was a salmonella outbreak in a couple stores and that's why they are treating all the animals with Uniprim. This was dated December 21, 2006. This treatment is to be continued until January 4, 2007.

Thursday, January 4, 2007

One of the customers came in to return the dead body of a parakeet they had purchased. They weren't sure what had happened, but the bird looked like s/he was burned alive. I cleaned out the fridge the other day because I could not take it any longer, given how nasty it was. Employees would literally hold their breath to open and shut it. E. said that she doesn't think it had been cleaned since they had gotten the fridge. My guess is it never gets cleaned again. The fish shipment arrived and, referring to the bettas (two of whom were dead on arrival), A2 said: "They're shipping them with less and less water. Their top fins are drying out. There's so little water, they can't keep themselves wet."

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Found one of the winter white hamsters in the NAR with pus coming out of her eyes, cold and barely moving. I showed her to J. (employee, not manager, who wandered back as I was looking for E.). J. (employee) said, "Looks like she's in so much pain." E. had just moved her earlier this morning from the sick room (cage unknown). E. said to take her back to the sick room for the time being, at which point the hamster started seizing. E. paged A3 and said, "I'd give her about 10 minutes, so I wouldn't worry about it. She looks like she's going through a death spasm." I asked if there was anyone here that could euthanize her. She said no and left the room. I couldn't leave her alone to die in this white-walled closet of death. I waited as she died in my hands shortly thereafter.

Wednesday, January 10, 2007

I spoke with J. (employee), who transferred from the Washington store, about her thoughts and feelings toward the Manchester store, and she said that we always have an ongoing wet tail problem, we receive really small animals who always get sick, and she has found hamsters half-eaten by their cagemates. Her old store didn't have a vet. They would take their animals to a local vet who "didn't really know anything" about small animals or birds. They had problems with dying cockatiels, especially ones who needed to be hand-fed. Many of them would die. She hates how the store employees would have to diagnose the animals and then just guess medications that may or may not work. She said, "I like animals way too much for this. I don't like playing a vet at work, because I'm not a vet."