



January 2005

PIJAC Canada position statement on genetically modified organisms

GMO's or genetically modified organisms have been the subject of global discussions for quite some time. Over the last couple of years, the availability of genetically modified pets to the trade has brought this issue to the forefront, prompting different associations to develop some kind of statement that can be offered to their respective memberships. PIJAC Canada, the unified voice of the Canadian pet industry, offers the following information:

Legislation

Section 106 of CEPA, *the Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, prohibits the importation of any living organism that may pose a threat to the Canadian people and /or the environment. Importation of such organisms is not permitted without prior notification. It is the importer's responsibility to inform the Canadian government of his intent to import such organism.

Environment Canada needs to be provided with specific information so that it can determine if these particular organisms pose a threat to humans and/or the environment, before it is allowed in the country.

Under the Act, interested companies must apply for a permit and provide all the necessary information as requested by the Canadian government.

Environmental issues

The government of Canada, like many other countries, is taking a strong stance on alien invasive species and the potential threat they represent to the Canadian people and /or ecosystems. PIJAC Canada recognizes the important role our industry has to play on this very important issue.

Our view is clearly outlined in PIJAC Canada's Exotic Animal Policy. These organisms must not pose a threat to Canadian ecosystems. At present time considering all the uncertainty surrounding genetically modified fish as to their possible threat to wild fish and aquatic invertebrates populations, their questionable "non-reproductive" status, there is no evidence to suggest that the Board approved criteria appearing in our Exotic Animal Policy can be met.

Public opposition to genetic modification

Views on the use of genetically modified organisms amongst the general population and the press remain quite hostile. As an association that promotes the benefits of pets and pet ownership, already quite an emotional issue, we must ensure that our approach instills confidence amongst concerned pet owners and the general public.

In light of the uncertainties that persist around genetically modified organisms as pets, do we want to attract more negative attention on our industry?

In light of this information and:

CONSIDERING that entertaining the notion of supporting genetically modified organisms, as pets would most likely be placing our industry and this association at the heart of a heated ethical debate;

CONSIDERING that the initial GMO applications seem to favor the development of “trendy or gimmicky” pets, which goes against the direction supported by this association relating to providing proper animal care, offering higher quality pets and promoting responsible pet ownership;

CONSIDERING the largely unproven safety status of GMO's as pets, especially on concerns over environmental issues and a clearly visible hostile public opinion;

CONSIDERING that much effort has been given in this industry to offer better quality pets to future and existing pet owners, this effort resulting in a higher than ever variety of pet species readily available to Canadian pet owners;

It is PIJAC Canada's position that the application of such a technology to the Canadian pet industry is not warranted. The incredible amount of work done by our industry over the years, which has resulted in the highest ever number and variety of healthy, proven pet species available to Canadian pet owners, makes it unnecessary.