

# Pet and Aquarium Retailer Program

## Implementation Guide



**The information in this guide will assist you in implementing the Code of Conduct for the Recognized Retailer Program at your business. We recommend you develop a set of tasks that are relevant for your business.**

**AISC has taken steps to make this process as easy as possible for retailers, including a low time commitment on your part.**

Review the material provided and use the information in this guide along with the suggested resources to help your business meet its commitment to reducing the introduction and spread of invasive species through the pet and aquarium trade.

## **In-House Review**

The first step is to inventory all species sold, grown, raised, or prescribed within your business. AISC will review your inventory list and ensure invasive species are not present. If one of the 52 Fisheries Act Prohibited Species are found, we will work with you to properly address them. Some species, like goldfish, are not prohibited but a concern as they are often intentionally released into the wild. Releasing any animal into a public waterbody, prohibited or not, is illegal in Alberta. AISC will provide handouts and information to provide to customers for all invasive species of concern that are permitted for sale in the province.

AISC will also work with you to determine the Latin names for all species. We recommend that Latin names are posted along with common names for all species sold at your store.

Here are some common pet, pond and aquarium species that are invasive in Alberta:

### **Prohibited**

Prussian carp (*Carassius gibelio*)

Oriental weather loach (*Misgurnus anguillicaudatus*)

Flowering Rush (*Butomus umbellatus*)

Yellow Flag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*)

Brazilian Elodea (*Egeria densa Planch*)

Fanwort (*Cobomba caroliniana*)

Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillate*)

Eurasian Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Frog bit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*)

### **Not Prohibited**

Goldfish (*Carassius auratus*)

Koi *Cyprinus* (*Cyprinus rubrofuscus*)

Rosy Red Minnow (*Pimephales promelas*)

All Crayfish!

## Don't Let It Loose Training

Research proves that knowledgeable customer service staff attracts and retains customers as they seek in-store assistance. The Alberta Invasive Species Council (AISC) offers you and your staff free training on the Don't Let It Loose Program. AISC staff are available to answer questions and provide support. Short, free eLearning courses are also available to explore the impact aquatic invasive species can have on an ecosystem. You can access our eLearning course in the Aquarium and Pond Retailer Recognition Pilot page in our Resources section. Short, in-person training sessions (30-40 minutes) may also be provided by AISC to train staff if desired.

Identify all staff positions at your business that should be aware of this program and would benefit from training. Our online training for pet and aquarium retailers will benefit your entire team. It's free and takes only 10 minutes to complete. Alternatively, identify 1-2 team members to complete the training and share their key learnings with the rest of your staff.

All staff that complete the online e-Learning course will be issued a certificate. This will allow AISC and retailers to track staff training for each store.

## Inform Customers

Recognized Retailers are vital for increasing invasive species awareness amongst clients. Market research has shown that the point of sale is the best place to inform individuals on the negative impacts of releasing pets into the wild. Invasive species are available to hobbyists and the public through catalogues, online distributors, local sales, and sharing invasive species amongst themselves. These sources are more difficult to monitor than in-store purchasing or doing direct business with industry professionals. In general, once educated about the issues around invasive species in the environment, customers genuinely desire to 'do the right thing' and practice responsible pet ownership to avoid contributing to these serious impacts.

Retailers have a great opportunity to inform the public on responsible pet and aquarium ownership:

- Place window clings on tanks that contain known invasive species.
- Display printed resources in a place that is visible to all customers, like near the point of purchase.
- Share knowledge with staff so they can educate customers on invasive species you stock, as well as responsible pet and aquarium ownership.
- Provide invasive species resources, like decals and rack cards, to interested customers
- Share invasive species messaging on your social media accounts. The AISC and national counterpart, Canadian Council on Invasive Species' (CCIS) social media accounts are excellent sources to repost messaging from or tag to spread the word further. (link to toolkit).

## Promotion and Recognition of Your Business

Businesses that sign and submit the Don't Let It Loose Code of Conduct automatically have their name and link to their website on the AISC and CCIS websites. Your business will be seen as an industry leader in sustainable, responsible pet ownership by setting an example for other businesses in reducing the spread of invasive pet and aquarium species. Your voluntary and successful participation in the Don't Let It Loose program can attract and retain customers.

AISC may also be able to offer interactive outreach events at your store to engage with customers and educate them about the threats of AIS. This can include giveaways and appearances by our goldfish mascot, Tank.

## Annual Check-In

An AISC representative will contact your business via email or phone annually to check in on your Recognized Retailer participation. The intent is to support your company in following the recommended practices for meeting the commitments outlined in the Code of Conduct and ensure your business can continue to be recognized in our advertising materials and on our websites.

The annual check-in will determine the following:

- If management still supports the Recognized Retailer Program
- What improvements to the program would help your business
- Updates to contact information
- Your success with any alternative species you offer to customers and clients
- Your success with education and outreach to your customers and clients
- What marketing and training resources have worked/not worked for your business

We want to continue to develop our relationship with your business through the Recognized Retailer Program to meet our collective goal of reducing the spread of invasive pet and aquarium species through industry practices.

## Resources

The AISC website ([abinvasives.ca](http://abinvasives.ca)) and newsletter provide information on the Don't Let It Loose program, resources, products, factsheets, and webinars. Sign up for our newsletter and visit our website to keep up to date and learn more about:

- Invasive species and their impacts
- Benefits of being a Recognized Retailer
- Upcoming programs and events
- New Alert Species

All AISC publications and products are downloadable from our website free of charge.

## Updates From AISC

Participating in the Don't Let It Loose Recognized Retailer Program keeps you updated on invasive species news and events across Alberta, Canada and globally.