

PetSmart Closes State Line Stores

If you are a retailer, you may be breathing a sigh of relief at the announcement that PetSmart will close its 180 State Line Tack departments nationwide. If you're a vendor who helps stock the company's shelves, you may be singing the blues.

Retailers and vendors alike in the equine trade industry are watching carefully for the fallout after the late-February announcement.

"Unfortunately, as we've grown to understand our equine and pet customers better, we've learned that equine is not something we do best," a statement issued by the company to vendors stated. The statement said all firm purchase orders



would be honored.

More than 425 sales associates working in State Line departments across the country will also likely be furloughed.

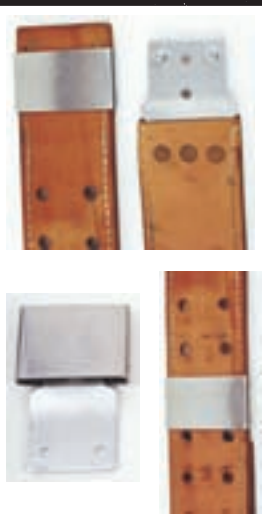
The square footage PetSmart formerly devoted to equine products will now be used for additional pet products and installation of the concept Pets Hotel, a cat and dog boarding service.

The Phoenix-based company will also be looking for a buyer for the State Line name, catalog, Web site, inventory and store in Brockport, N.Y.

State Line Tack opened as a single retail outlet in 1980 in Plaistow, N.H. Its first step toward a major catalog business were discount circulars sent to customers. On Jan. 30, 1996, PetSmart acquired State Line.

Retailers responding to an online poll on the topic on the Tack 'n Togs Web site (www.tackntogs.com) had varying views of the development. Stores within close proximity to State Line shops were anticipating increased traffic later, but initially probably a drop in sales as consumers soak up the closeout deals. PetSmart said in a statement that it would be offering "extreme clearance prices" in its store. Other retailers reported that State Line had initially cut into their business, but trained and knowledgeable staff eventually brought them back to the independent stores. Still others expressed concern that another large entity would buy up State Line and the competition would return.

Dover Saddlery went public two years ago and announced a plan to open 50 stores across the United States. Dover has not said publicly if it is interested in acquiring any State Line properties.



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