



COUNTY OF FRESNO

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WALMART AGREES TO PAY \$875,000 IN CIVIL PENALTIES FOR MISLEADING “GREENWASHING” CLAIMS

The Fresno County District Attorney’s Office, along with 22 other District Attorney’s Offices in California, has settled a consumer protection action against Walmart Stores, Inc. (as well as Walmart.com USA, LLC and the Walmart subsidiary Jet.com, Inc.).

The action was filed in Napa County, and alleged that Walmart sold plastic products in stores and on-line that were misleadingly labeled “biodegradable” or “compostable” in violation of California law.

Plastic waste can take up to a thousand years to decompose, depending on the environment in which it is disposed, and a growing number of marketers have sought to promote the sale of plastic products using misleading claims of biodegradability. Many Californians choose products based on these claims, despite the fact that landfills are oxygen-poor and thus tend to mummify products, rather than allow them to biodegrade.

California Law imposes an outright ban on the sale of plastics labeled “biodegradable” (or labeled with similar language), since such claims are inherently misleading without thorough disclaimers regarding how quickly the product will biodegrade in a landfill or in other environments where it may be disposed. The sale of plastic products labeled “compostable” is also prohibited – unless the product meets certain scientific standards that ensure the plastic will break down in municipal compost.

The judgment prohibits Walmart from selling plastic products labeled “biodegradable” or with other terms implying it will break down in a landfill or other environment. Walmart is also prohibited from selling plastic products labeled “compostable” unless a scientific certification supports the claim.

Walmart agreed to pay \$875,000 in civil penalties, and an additional payment of \$50,000 to CalRecycle to fund the testing of plastic products marketed to consumers as compostable or degradable. Walmart’s recently purchased subsidiary, Jet.com, agreed to pay \$15,000 in civil penalties.

The involved District Attorneys' offices are thankful to Walmart and Jet.com for their cooperation in implementing significant changes to their websites and to Walmart's stores in order to stay in compliance with California law. Walmart and Jet.com did not admit liability.

The Media may email FCDAMedia@co.fresno.ca.us or contact Administrative Assistant Leslie Gillespie at (559) 600-4442 with questions.

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