



News Release

Contact

[Kristin Urquiza](#) 415-867-7619 (Chicago)

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Walgreens retailing of penguin food meets international backlash

Penguins deliver letter to flagship store in a “*March of the Penguins*”

Chicago – Penguins arrived to Chicagoland today to advocate for protection of krill, their primary food source. The activists, part of an international campaign called [Lifeline Antarctica](#), rallied outside Walgreens flagship store on State Street as part of an international call on Walgreens Boots Alliance, the largest drugstore retailer in the United States and Europe, to stop the sale of Antarctic krill omega-3 supplements. The call to the retailer is an integral part of the international effort to establish Marine Protected Areas across the Southern Ocean, the huge body of water that surrounds Antarctica.

Krill, a small crustacean, is the foundation of the food chain in Antarctica’s ocean and is critical to the [survival of penguins](#), seals, and [whales](#).

“This is a critical moment for Boots to act,” said Lifeline Antarctica’s campaign director, Kristin Urquiza. “The ocean that surrounds Antarctica is now being sucked dry of the most important species in the food chain—the tiny krill upon which all the whales, seals, and penguins rely. We’re here to send Walgreens a strong message to leave the krill for the penguins and stop the sale of Antarctic krill omega-3 supplements.”

People dressed as penguins and whales “marched” between the five Walgreens stores between Washington and Lake street, delivering a [letter](#) to Walgreens store managers addressed to Walgreens Boots Alliance’s CEO, signed by eleven national and international oceans, environmental, and consumer rights groups representing millions of people around the world.

The Chicago event follows a similar event in Santa Cruz, California where people dressed as penguins and whales, brought babies dressed as krill, along for a letter delivery.

The Chicago event event follows a recent “march of the penguins” in Santa Cruz and San Francisco, California and along London’s Oxford street where activists dressed as whales and penguins delivered a letter to six retailers of the conglomerate.

For more than 50 years an [international treaty](#) has totally protected Antarctica from commercial exploitation – but that treaty has a huge gap that fails to protect the great ocean that surrounds the continent—and corporations like Boots are rushing in to make a profit.

Industrial-scale krill fisheries are literally sucking billions of these life-sustaining creatures out of the water with giant vacuums that operate around the clock – taking them from the blue whales to be crushed into omega-3 pills.

Krill is facing another human-caused challenge: climate change. In addition to overfishing, they're losing their food: the algae that grows under the rapidly melting sea ice and ocean acidification is harming krill reproduction. The double whammy of fishing and climate change has devastated the krill populations—which have [declined by 80%](#) over the last four decades.

“The evidence of the impact on the food chain is everywhere,” said Rachel Kippen, from Save Our Shores. “Whales are washing up on shores around the world malnourished. In Patagonia, whales are having fewer calves because of insufficient food in their Antarctic breeding grounds. Antarctica’s krill and marine life need the same protections afforded to the wildlife on its land—and quickly—before the corporations profiting from krill get in the way.”

After pressure from tens of thousands of people spearheaded by the consumer group SumOfUs, Sainsbury’s pulled krill products from its shelves. The 37,000 signatures were collected by SumOfUs thru an online petition launched a month ago to Walgreens Boots Alliance calling on the retailer to follow suit. Their report, entitled [Vacuuming Antarctica for Krill: The Corporations Plundering the Earth’s Last Frontier](#), details the important role krill play in the Antarctic marine ecosystem as the primary food source for seabirds and marine mammals including penguins, seals and whales.

“Boots says that caring for the environment has always been one of the core values of its brand. The real test of its commitment will be whether Boots will choose to help protect the greatest marine refuge on Earth,” said senior campaigner Katherine Tu from SumOfUs. “[Sainsbury’s](#) and ASDA along with the United States’ Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s have all taken krill off their shelves. But as long as Walgreens Boots Alliance, the largest drug store retailer in Europe and the UK, continues to drive a market for krill, the exploitation will not stop.”

Walgreens Boots Alliance companies sell a variety of krill-based omega-3 products. At Walgreens, these include Schiff’s MegaRed, PureLife Naturals, Sundown Naturals, Finest Nutrition, Natures Bounty, Swisse, Barlean’s Organic Oils, Nature’s Way EfaGold, Healthy Origins, Doctor’s Best, Olympian Labs, Muscletech Platinum, Omega Works Red Krill, Webber Naturals, 21st Century, Jarrow Formulas, Life Extension, and Walgreens brand.

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[Lifeline Antarctica](#) is a campaign dedicated to getting krill off store shelves and working to protect Antarctica’s oceans. The campaign is supported by a dozen leading oceans and environmental organizations and tens of thousands of people.