



May 2, 2023

Mr. Bjørn Gulden, CEO  
adidas AG  
Adi-Dassler-Strasse 1  
91074 Herzogenaurach  
Germany

Dear Mr. Gulden:

On behalf of the Center for a Humane Economy, the Animal Wellness Foundation, Animal Wellness Action and our hundreds of thousands of members and supporters, we ask you to end your company's purchasing and use of kangaroo skins for soccer cleats or any other derivative product. The use of kangaroo leather for soccer cleats is inconsistent with adidas's claims that the company "aims to source materials of animal origin in a humane, ethical, and sustainable manner concerning animal welfare and species conservation." The incongruity between this avowed policy and the practical elements of commercial hunting in Australia that produces the orphaning, bludgeoning, and death of half a million joeys as collateral damage is glaring. Please align your sourcing practices with your explicit promises to the public.

#### **"K-leather" cleats are underperforming and obsolete**

While kangaroo-sourced cleats may have enjoyed a reputation for high performance when marketed decades ago, they no longer compare favorably with lighter synthetic models. Credit goes to your team of athletic shoe engineers and innovators who've designed better shoes that don't rely on wild-animal skins. Look no further than the latest 2022 World Cup scoring statistics for confirmation: of 172 goals scored in last year's World Cup, 164 (95%) came from players wearing synthetic shoes or leather from domesticated animals (with non-animal fabrics dominating).

With the shift at the highest levels of sport toward non-animal-based shoes in mind, Puma announced last month that it is ditching kangaroo leather for the non-animal-based material, stating "K-BETTER has proven to outperform the previous KING K-Leather in testing for touch, comfort, and durability." Subsequently, Nike announced that it will stop using kangaroo skins for its Nike Tiempo model and all cleats in 2023.

Morality aside, equipping players with kangaroo-leather cleats makes as much sense as sending a hockey player out onto the ice with a wooden stick. Formerly routine practices can quickly become outdated and embarrassingly inadequate. Calling audibles in equipment selection is part of sport. We do truly hope that adidas will make a course correction when it comes to sourcing skins from the largest mass slaughter of wildlife in the world.

#### **There is nothing "humane, ethical, and sustainable" about the way kangaroos are killed**

While performance problems should be a compelling reason for phasing out cleats made from kangaroo leather, it is the inhumanity and cruelty associated with killing kangaroos in their native habitats that clinches the case and creates urgency to halt the sourcing of that product. What's more, our investigators just inspected six retail shoe stores in northern California and found that five of those stores continue to sell kangaroo-based shoes by adidas. Your company has been extraordinarily obstinate in supporting the trafficking of wild skins from kangaroos and we are appalled that the company continues to be complicit in breaking California law.

Each year, commercial shooters invade the habitats of kangaroos and gun down two million of them. Killing guidelines are deficient and impossible to enforce in the field. There are no monitors of the hunt, which occurs at night, with darkness making it impossible for the shooters to spot and chase down wounded animals.

The most indefensible feature of the commercial kill involves the undeniable and extensive cruelty to juvenile kangaroos. The commercial hunt invariably results in mass shootings of lactating females, with joeys still in their pouch or nursing from their mother. The industry's commercial code instructs the hunter to dispatch orphaned animals by blunt force trauma, often accomplished by slamming the joey against the side of a truck or using a rock to crush the small skull. If the joey is strong enough to evade the bludgeoning and scamper off in fear, the newborn is certain to die from exposure, starvation, dehydration, or predation. The scale of the incidental killing of joeys is larger than the take in Canada's grisly commercial killing of baby harp seals and hooded seals at its zenith.

### **Consumers want products that are unaffiliated with animal cruelty**

The cause of animal protection is ascendant around the world. A glance around the offices of countless other animal-friendly workplaces reflects how intrinsically we humans are connected to animals. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks recently forecast that animal rights would be "one of the signature moral rights of the decade." Consumers worldwide served by adidas's products oppose cockfighting, seal clubbing, horse slaughter, duplicative animal testing, intensive confinement of farm animals and other abuses. Why should it be any surprise that they would oppose a commercial slaughter for athletic shoes that could be made with other fabrics and that result in the massacre of 500,000 joeys? Millions of people gave money to Australian charities to rescue joeys after the fires burned up so many animals just three years ago, so you might rightly imagine that they'd not want to finance the intentional and entirely unnecessary massacre of kangaroos for commerce.

Continuing to source skins from kangaroos shot in the wild in their native habitats in Australia represents a growing reputational risk to your company. Your company's purchasing practices are the central concern now for our "Kangaroos Are Not Shoes" campaign, especially now that your major competitors have pledged a rapid phase-out of wild-killed kangaroo parts. Our efforts, and the tumult and agitation they produce, can be avoided by implementing policies grounded on kindness and mercy.

We hope to celebrate an announcement by adidas that it will stop sourcing of skins from wildlife killed in their native habitats. If further discussion is required, we would be grateful for the opportunity to sit down with you to discuss this issue in person in Germany or in the United States.

Sincerely yours,

Wayne Pacelle  
President  
Center for a Humane Economy

Annie Harvilicz, D.V.M.  
President  
Animal Wellness Foundation

Deborah Wilson, M.D.  
Board Chairwoman  
Animal Wellness Action