

PEOPLE OF THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

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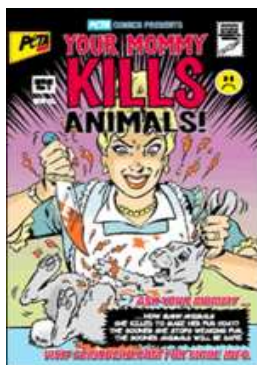
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is an American animal rights organization based in Norfolk, Virginia, and led by Ingrid Newkirk, its international president. A non-profit corporation with 300 employees and two million members and supporters, it says it is the largest animal rights group in the world. Its slogan is "animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment."

Founded in March 1980 by Newkirk and animal rights activist Alex Pacheco, the organization first caught the public's attention in the summer of 1981 Silver Spring monkeys case, a widely publicized dispute about experiments conducted on 17 macaque monkeys inside the Institute of Behavioral Research in Silver Spring, Maryland. The case lasted ten years, involved the only police raid on an animal laboratory in the United States, triggered an amendment in 1985 to that country's Animal Welfare Act, and established PETA as an internationally known organization. Since then, in its campaigns and undercover investigations, it has focused on four core issues—opposition to factory farming, fur farming, animal testing, and animals in entertainment—though it also campaigns against fishing, the killing of animals regarded as pests, the keeping of chained backyard dogs, cock fighting, dog fighting, and bullfighting.

Philosophy and activism

PETA writes that it is an animal rights organization, and as such it rejects speciesism and the idea of animals as property, and opposes the use of animals in any form: as food, clothing, entertainment, or as research subjects. One oft-cited quote of Newkirk's is: "When it comes to feelings like hunger, pain, and thirst, a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy."

PETA lobbies governments to impose fines where animal-welfare legislation has been violated, promotes a vegan diet, tries to reform the practices in factory farms and slaughterhouses, goes undercover into animal research laboratories, farms, and circuses, initiates media campaigns against particular companies or practices, helps to find sanctuaries for former circus and zoo animals, and initiates lawsuits against companies.



PETA distributed images of the monkeys with the caption, "Your Mommy Kills Animals" Message at young people. A monkey in a restraint tube filmed by PETA inside Covance, Vienna, Virginia, 2004–2005

with a knife.

Campaigns and consumer boycotts

The organization is known for its aggressive media campaigns, combined with a solid base of celebrity support –Pamela Anderson, Drew Barrymore, Alec Baldwin, John Gielgud, Bill Maher, Stella McCartney, and Alicia Silverstone have all appeared in PETA ads. Every week, Newkirk holds what The New Yorker calls a war council, with two dozen of her top strategists gathered round a square table in the PETA conference room, no suggestion considered too outrageous. PETA also gives a yearly prize, called the Proggy Award, to individuals or organizations dedicated to animal welfare or who distinguish themselves through their efforts within the area of animal welfare.

Many of the campaigns have focused on large corporations. Fast food companies such as KFC, Wendy's, and Burger King have been targeted. In the animal-testing industry, PETA's consumer boycotts have focused on Avon, Benetton, Bristol-Myers-Squibb, Chesebrough-Pond's, Dow Chemical, General Motors, and others. Their modus operandi includes buying shares in target companies such as McDonald's and Kraft Foods in order to exert influence. The campaigns have delivered results for PETA. McDonald's and Wendy's introduced vegetarian options after PETA targeted them; Petco stopped selling some exotic pets; and Polo Ralph Lauren said it would no longer use fur. Avon, Estee Lauder, Benetton, and Tonka Toy Co. all stopped testing products on animals, the Pentagon stopped shooting pigs and goats in wounds tests, and a slaughterhouse in Texas was closed down.

As part of its anti-fur action, PETA members have infiltrated hundreds of fashion shows in the U.S, Europe, and once in China, throwing red paint on the catwalks, and unfurling banners. Celebrities and supermodels have posed naked for the group's, and says I'd Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur.



Steve-O during PETA's "I'd rather go naked than wear fur" campaign

The New Yorker writes that PETA activists have crawled through the streets of Paris wearing leg-hold traps and thrown around money soaked in fake blood at the International Fur Fair. They regularly engage in pie-throwing—in January 2010, Canadian MP Gerry Byrne compared them to terrorists for throwing a tofu cream pie at Canada's fishery minister Gail Shea in protest at the seal hunt.

Positions

Newkirk is outspoken in her support of direct action, writing that no movement for social change has ever succeeded without what she calls the militarism component: "Thinkers may prepare revolutions," she wrote of the ALF in, "but bandits must carry them out."

On euthanasia

PETA opposes the no kill movement. The group takes in feral cat colonies with diseases such as feline AIDS and leukemia, stray dogs, litters of parvo-infected puppies, and backyard dogs, and says that it would be unrealistic to follow a no-kill policy in such instances. They offer free euthanasia services to counties that kill unwanted animals via gassing or shooting – they recommend the use of an intravenous injection of sodium pentobarbital if administered by a trained professional, and for severely ill or dying pets when euthanasia at a veterinarian is unaffordable. They recommend euthanasia for certain breeds, such as pit bull terriers, and in certain situations for animals in shelters: for example, for those living for long periods in cramped cages.

On wildlife conservation personalities

PETA argues that conservation personalities, such as Steve Irwin, place animals under stress.

PETA is critical of television personalities they call self-professed wildlife warriors, arguing that while a conservationist message is getting across, some of the actions are harmful to animals, such as invading animals' homes, netting them, subjecting them to stressful environments, and wrestling with them – often involving young animals the group says should be with their mothers.



On animal testing

PETA opposes animal testing – whether toxicity testing, basic or applied research, or for education and training – on both moral and practical grounds. Newkirk told Vogue magazine in 1989 that even if it resulted in a cure for AIDS, PETA would oppose it. The group also believes that it is wasteful, unreliable, and irrelevant to human health, because artificially induced diseases in animals are not identical to human diseases. They say that animal experiments are frequently redundant and lack accountability, oversight, and regulation. They promote alternatives, including embryonic stem cell research and in vitro cell research.

PETA employees have themselves volunteered for human testing of vaccines; Scott Van Valkenburg, the group's Director of Major Gifts, said in 1999 that he had volunteered for human testing of HIV vaccines.