

August 4, 2009

Ed Kunzelman, Founder and Chair  
Frank Difatta, President  
Petland USA



Mr. Kunzelman and Mr. Difatta:

PETA's office was alerted last week to a photograph that was posted on Facebook by Elizabeth Carlisle, who we understand was employed by your company until last week as an associate at the 2000 Brittain Rd. (Ste. 41) Petland store in Akron, Ohio. The photo in question shows a grinning Carlisle dangling two dead, soaking-wet rabbits by their scruffs. Carlisle confirms a Facebook friend's guess that she drowned these two rabbits. In response to the friend's speculation, she exclaims "bingo!" and writes, "[T]he manager took the pic for me. [S]he reminded me that there were people outside as [I] was swearing at them to just hurry up and die but then she was so kind as to take this picture." Other comments that Carlisle posted along with this disturbing photograph make it clear that the rabbits had been allowed to "attack" and "eat" each other while in the store's care and custody and that they had sustained injuries as a result, including "deep wounds all over," "an eye missing," what Petland staff "suspected was a broken jaw," and paralysis from the waist down – injuries that clearly take some time to occur and, with all due respect, would not have occurred had these animals been provided with proper care and supervision.

Death by drowning is terrifying, painful, and prolonged. Drowning as a method of killing is condemned outright by the American Veterinary Medical Association, which classifies it as "unacceptable" and states, "Drowning is not a means of euthanasia and is inhumane." Drowning an animal also clearly violates anti-cruelty statutes in many states, including in Ohio.

We are sure that your public relations folks are all over this, and we understand that Carlisle may have already been terminated, but the reality is that this is likely not an isolated incident – just one that we were made aware of. It is also clear that Carlisle did not act alone. A second person snapped that photo, which means that *at least* two people considered the horrific suffering of these animals to be a laughing matter. According to Carlisle, that second person is a female in a management position at Petland.

We seek your written assurance that you will do the following:

- Fully cooperate with law-enforcement agencies investigating this case.
- Launch an internal investigation into this incident and terminate employees who are found to have participated.



**PETA**

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

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- Support criminal charges against and the prosecution of individuals deemed to have been involved.
- Launch a comprehensive review of Petland's policies and procedures regarding veterinary care and euthanasia for injured and sick animals in its stores.

Finally, we ask you to take a step back and truly consider what this incident makes clear: Petland has no business selling *any* animals, since its staff can't manage to provide them with basic supervision and minimally adequate care. But at the very least, we call on you to discontinue the sales of rabbits immediately as other national pet store chains have done. It is the right thing to do and will show some good faith on Petland's part—which will be sorely needed following the negative publicity that this case will generate.

Thank you for your time and attention. I can be reached by phone at [REDACTED], by fax at [REDACTED], or via e-mail at [REDACTED]. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Bell  
Cruelty Casework Manager  
Cruelty Investigations Department



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