

February 24, 2009

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
Governor of Pennsylvania

Via e-mail

Dear Governor Rendell:

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 2 million members and supporters, including tens of thousands in Pennsylvania. We were shocked and saddened by the death of Kenzie Houk, allegedly at the hands of Ms. Houk's fiancé's 11-year-old son. The boy's father taught his son how to kill animals with the youth-model shotgun allegedly used to kill Ms. Houk. **This tragedy is evidence that teaching children to kill animals can have deadly consequences for humans as well. We urge you to call for a ban on hunting for children under the age of 18.**

In most cases, people don't hunt to put food on the table. They hunt for recreation, and in this day and age, it is cruel and unnecessary. Hunting fosters insensitivity to the suffering of others, disrupts animal migration and hibernation patterns, and damages ecosystems. We should be teaching our children to show kindness and respect for others—human and animal.

Mental-health professionals and top law enforcement officials consider animal abuse to be a red flag. The American Psychiatric Association identifies cruelty to animals as one of the diagnostic criteria for conduct disorders, and the FBI uses reports of animal abuse in analyzing the threat potential of suspected and known criminals. FBI interviews with murderers revealed that 36 percent had tortured and killed animals as children, and 46 percent had done so as adolescents. Cruelty to animals is common in the violent histories of most of our nation's serial killers and school shooters.

We need to teach children the value of life by preventing violence rather than endorsing and encouraging it. Remember that teaching a child to be kind to a mouse is as valuable to the child as it is to the mouse. Please push for legislation that prohibits children from hunting. Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Reiman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracy Reiman
Executive Vice President