

August 17, 2004

Dan Wyant, Director
Michigan Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 30017
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Mr. Wyant:

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is the world's largest animal rights charity, with more than 800,000 members and supporters. **We are writing to ask that your department regulate the methods by which animals used for fur are killed.** Our request comes on the heels of an investigation we conducted into a chinchilla "farm" in Midland operated by Robin and Julie Ouderkirk. The Ouderkirks also sell chinchillas to laboratories and pet stores. On the enclosed video, Mr. Ouderkirk demonstrates how he kills these small animals by hooking metal alligator clips to their ears and hind feet, after which he plugs the device into a standard light socket. This method of electrocution (head to toe) is condemned by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) because it causes horrendous suffering. The conscious animals' hearts seize in painful attacks that continue until death, which can be minutes later.

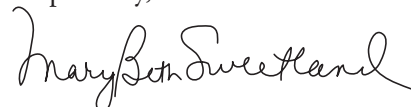
There is also a question as to whether Mr. Ouderkirk's other killing method—breaking the necks of the chinchillas—is humane, as the animals are at the high end of the weight limit over which "cervical dislocation" is not recommended by the AVMA.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture's "Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices for the Care of Farm Animals," says that minks and foxes raised for fur should be killed "as quickly and painlessly as possible." No mention is made of chinchillas, and the publication is simply a guideline with no regulatory authority or enforcement behind it.

We believe that states that contain fur farms should ensure that animals are not being cruelly killed, as they are at the Ouderkirks' farm. While electrocution, neck-breaking, and drowning are cheap killing methods for farmers, they are uncivilized and should be prohibited by regulation. We have also asked that the U.S. Department of Agriculture take on oversight of fur farms (see enclosed letter). Until it does, we hope that you will agree that there should be a limit to the cruelty that humans are allowed to impose on animals used for fur and that states should regulate animal care and killing on fur farms.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I can be reached at 757-962-8334 if your office has questions. We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,



Mary Beth Sweetland, Senior Vice President
Director, Research & Investigations Department



PETA

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