



April 5th, 2018

John J. Lynch, Jr.
CEO
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Dear Mr. Lynch,

On behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide, I urge you to expand the definition of the word “leather” in the American Heritage Dictionary so that it includes “durable plant-based and synthetic materials processed for use in the clothing, footwear, and upholstery industries and others.”

As you certainly understand, language matters and is essential in reflecting our ever-evolving culture. It’s clear, then, that the definition of “leather” must include plant-based and synthetic materials, which are increasingly gaining favor with consumers around the world who refuse to support the mass commodification of animals exploited in the traditional leather trade.

It’s easy to see why materials not derived from animals are popular: Millions of cows and other animals killed for their skin every year endure the horrors of factory farming—extreme crowding and deprivation, as well as castration, branding, tail-docking, and dehorning—all without any painkillers. At slaughterhouses, their throats are cut, and some are skinned and dismembered while they’re still conscious. It’s also now widely recognized that animal agriculture—including leather, its methane- and nitrous oxide-rich coproduct—is a leading contributor to climate change, contributing to 51 percent or more of global greenhouse-gas emissions.

Make no mistake: Animal-free leather is here to stay. As consumer demand for cruelty-free goods rises, the clothing, furniture, and automotive industries are quickly working to meet it. Already, Tesla uses exclusively vegan leather for its car interiors, and more and more fashion brands are moving toward all-vegan collections. According to a recent independent study, the global vegan leather market is set to be worth \$85 billion by 2025.

All things considered, it’s clear that the American Heritage Dictionary must expand its definition of leather to reflect the fact that this material may also be made from plant-based or synthetic materials.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your reply and am available to discuss this important issue with you at your earliest convenience.

Best regards,

Tracy Reiman
Executive Vice President
PETA

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