



March 13, 2014

Wayne M. Perry
President
Boy Scouts of America
c/o Donna Bergman, Executive Assistant

Via e-mail: donna.bergman@scouting.org

Dear Mr. Perry:

As current and former Boy Scouts and also troop leaders, we were appalled to learn from our friends at PETA that a scout leader in Florida recently bludgeoned two rabbits to death in front of his troop and then fed them to the children. We are equally outraged by the Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) complete lack of action to prevent other animals from enduring the same fate and other scouts from being exposed to similar acts of violence and cruelty.

Killing animals just because we can is entirely contrary to the BSA's mission "to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes." It also violates the organization's founding principles. In *Scouting for Boys*, Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell—the first chief scout of the Boy Scouts Association—said, "A scout is a friend to animals. He should save them, as far as possible, from pain, and should not kill any animal unnecessarily."

Scouts can and should be taught practical, nonviolent survival techniques, such as how to build shelter, summon help, find water, and forage for edible plants. As Eagle Scout D.L. Bates wrote in a letter to PETA, "I managed to attain the highest levels within the BSA without smashing animals, and I don't recall this sort of thing being part of the BSA regimen. I would have quit had it been."

Teaching kids to kill undermines their natural compassion and encourages them to disregard others' suffering—particularly those who are different from them or who are weaker than they are. It can contribute to children's viewing violence and cruelty as acceptable or even "fun." We agree with former Cub Scout and Webelo John Newman, who wrote to PETA: "This is disturbing beyond all definitions of the word disturbing. If I had a son in this troop, I would have removed him immediately."

In this age of bullying and school shootings, encouraging impressionable young people to hurt any living being is grossly irresponsible. The BSA should be leading the way in helping children grow into kind and responsible adults, by teaching them that violence is wrong, no matter how different from them the victim appears to be.

Until the BSA takes action to protect animals and children, we regret to say that we can no longer feel proud to be associated with this organization. We urge you to update the BSA's official policy immediately so as to explicitly forbid scout leaders and all adults from teaching children to kill animals. Thank you.

Sincerely,

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

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