

September 13, 2021

Mary Pfeiffer, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Neenah Joint School District

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Pfeiffer:

I'm writing as a former elementary school teacher and on behalf of [TeachKind](#), PETA's humane education division, which works with schools across the country to promote compassion for animals. **I'd like to open a dialog with you about an ["adopt a cow" program](#) that students from Neenah Joint School District participated in.** There's no doubt that the teacher's intent was to provide an educational experience. However, since you're a leader in the educational community, I urge you to reflect on the disturbing underlying message that a program like this sends to young people.

The [farm](#) mentioned in this [article](#) presents information to students as part of the "adopt a cow" program and states that it raises calves in hutches and feeds them pasteurized milk, which means that they're taken away from their mothers. Portraying this practice as routine and presenting it in a neutral manner suggests to children that keeping calves away from their mothers is natural and acceptable. In reality, the bond between a cow and her calf is particularly strong, and there are countless reports that mother cows have frantically called and searched for their babies after the calves were taken away and sold to veal or beef farms. Given the chance, [cows](#) nurture their babies and form lifelong friendships with each other. But in the dairy industry, they're treated as milk-producing machines and repeatedly forcibly impregnated. Calves aren't even permitted to nurse during the natural lactation period—the milk intended for them is taken and sold to humans instead.

The article also mentions that students who participate in this program get attached to the calves they "adopt." Consider how heartbroken they would be to learn that the calves desperately want to nurse and be comforted by their mothers.

Because you're a leader in the education community, it's imperative that you offer equal time to other perspectives in order to present students with a balanced view that will enable them to make informed, healthy, and compassionate choices. **We'd love to offer schools in your district a visit from our mechanical cow, Carly, who's always well received by children, for her first time back in school since the pandemic started.** She tells her student audiences a compelling story about her past and the kind humans who gave her a chance at a bright future that includes friends and freedom. This would assist you by supplying age-appropriate information about the lives of cows in the dairy industry in order to help students understand what's really involved in the production of cow's milk. [Carly has been a big hit on her tour around the country.](#)





Additionally, Catskill Animal Sanctuary in New York offers a [virtual field trip program](#) in which students get to interact with the animals, including cows who are not exploited by the farming industry. This program fulfills educational standards, as well as sharing the animals' rescue stories and highlighting their individual personalities. We'd be happy to assist with program fees.

We hope you'll consider our offer to help students think critically about this important issue. On behalf of PETA's more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide, many of whom live in Wisconsin, we thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully,



Lisbet Chiriboga, M.S. Ed., Program Manager

cc: Diane Galow, Principal, Tullar Elementary School ([REDACTED])

