



December 7, 2022

Chuck Scothon  
Senior Vice President and General Manager, Fisher-Price  
and Global Head of Infant & Preschool, Mattel Inc.

Dear Mr. Scothon:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals U.S.—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally, including many parents and kids—to request that you omit the animal toys from Little People Nativity playsets. There are many sound arguments against including animals, for health, welfare, and other reasons. Such a move would go a long way toward encouraging future generations not to support or participate in harmful live Nativities containing animals, which contradict what the holiday represents: peace on Earth and goodwill to *all* sentient beings. Let me explain.

Every year, stressed animals are forced to appear in live Nativity scenes around the country. Camels, donkeys, and sheep are frequently [rented from exhibitors](#) whose handlers routinely use force and abusive tools to make the animals obey commands out of fear of punishment. The animals are also hauled from venue to venue inside cramped trailers in all weather conditions and forced to stand on hard pavement for long hours. When they aren't on the road, they're typically confined to small holding pens, without being able to experience kinship or select a lifelong partner. Children, who have natural compassion for animals, would be sad to learn that this life of deprivation stands in stark contrast to the lighthearted play encouraged by the smiling animals included in your playsets.

In numerous cases, frightened animals have tried to flee from these displays, including in 2021 when a camel escaped from a live Nativity in Kansas and was seen walking along a highway, then pursued by police on a golf course and eventually lassoed and forced to return. In another incident, a [cow escaped](#) from a live Nativity in Philadelphia twice in one night. She walked on icy roads and through a parking garage. Luckily, she didn't sustain any injuries, but she could easily have been hit by a car or otherwise been harmed. And a live Nativity in Pikeville, Kentucky, was canceled after shocking video of an animal handler [punching a camel](#) surfaced online. The man was trying to make the camel lie down through the use of force—including by hitting her in the face.

These events also pose a risk to public health, as they can facilitate the transmission of numerous dangerous pathogens such as *E. coli*, salmonella, and campylobacter through direct or indirect contact with animals. Even the area surrounding an animal's pen can be teeming with bacteria, which children may bring home on their clothing—and children are especially vulnerable, because they're less likely to practice proper hygiene.

Many theologians, including Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, maintain that, according to the Bible, not a single animal was at the first Nativity, so removing

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- PETA Netherlands
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these animal figurines would also make the toys more historically accurate. As play is the foundation of learning in children, we hope you'll make the kind decision to remove animals from your Nativity playsets. This small change would make Fisher-Price a leader in dispelling this myth, thereby helping to end the suffering that animals endure because of this human error. Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Marta Holmberg  
Senior Director