

July 23, 2025

Rob Pouch  
Superintendent  
Thornapple Kellogg Schools

Via e-mail: [rpouch@tkschools.org](mailto:rpouch@tkschools.org)

Dear Mr. Pouch:

I'm writing from [TeachKind](#), PETA's humane education division, which works with thousands of educators across the U.S. to promote compassion for animals. We saw the news that Thornapple Kellogg Schools broke ground on a new barn, and we have an exciting offer for you. **PETA is ready to donate \$5,000 to your district to further expand plant-based agriculture through the hydroponic garden program at Thornapple Kellogg Middle and High Schools and to go toward the school's new barn if you commit to only programs about plant-based agriculture instead of raising animals for food.**

Many young people join animal agriculture programs because they're interested in animals—but these programs demand that they develop a harmful disconnect from those very animals, the consequences of which can be detrimental. Times are changing, and agriculture programs need not continue teaching students to use animals for awards, accolades, and money or to send their animal friends—even if they've cared for and bonded with them for months—to a violent, terrifying death at a slaughterhouse. Each week, TeachKind is alerted to reports of cruelty-to-animals cases involving young people. Given the rampant bullying and youth violence in schools as well as the alarming cases of young people who abuse animals that regularly appear in the news, fostering empathy for all sentient beings is vital and timely.

We urge you to do so by adopting 21st-century programming, which recognizes that the future of agriculture relies on growing crops instead of raising and killing animals for food to combat the climate catastrophe. Raising animals for food requires massive amounts of land, food, energy, and water. It's estimated that animal agriculture is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all the world's transportation systems combined. According to the United Nations, a global shift toward a vegan diet is vital to combat the worst effects of climate change. Your agricultural program could easily focus on helping young people grow into compassionate, responsible individuals who will make the world a better place for *everyone* by growing healthy fruits and vegetables by expanding on the existing hydroponic garden.

At TeachKind, we're [former teachers](#), so we know that educators have the best intentions and want to build on students' natural interest in animals to cultivate qualities like responsibility and caring for other sentient beings as well as helping them develop career skills. But we can share these essential lessons in ways that teach students that animals are *someone*, not *something*. **Will Thornapple Kellogg Schools commit to ending the use of animals in its agriculture program?**



Our staff would be happy to discuss this issue with you and to assist with this compassionate change.

On behalf of PETA and our many members and supporters in Michigan, I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration of this important matter. I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Julie Everett  
Writer and Engagement Coordinator  
[TeachKind](#) | PETA's Humane Education Division

Cc: Tony Petersen, Principal ([tpetersen@tkschools.org](mailto:tpetersen@tkschools.org))  
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