

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

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Via email

Stewart Johnston, Commissioner and Rules Committee Chairperson
Canadian Football League

Re: Proposal to the CFL Rules Committee

Dear Mr. Johnston:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 10.4 million members and supporters globally—to urge the CFL Rules Committee to consider a proposal to switch from cowskin to an elite synthetic football. This would be effective starting in the 2027 CFL season, after a one-year development and trial period for the CFL to work in collaboration with Wilson to select and perfect the highest performance model and test it with CFL players.

This proposal follows PETA's undercover investigation of a slaughterhouse in the confirmed supply chain in the manufacturing of Wilson's official CFL football, made in Ada, Ohio. You can watch the investigation footage here, in a video that we will be releasing this month.

In this disturbing footage, you will see that cows are killed and dismembered in full view of their frightened herd mates, who can see, hear, and smell the others being hacked apart and skinned. When it is their turn, a slaughterer uses a captive bolt gun to deliver a concussive blow, cuts their throats, exsanguinates them, and cuts their heads off.

The footage—captured at Ohio's Rodabaugh Bros Meats, whose owner bragged to PETA's investigator that he gets to "kill things"—shows multiple violations of industry and government guidelines, including:

- The slaughterer using a captive bolt gun to the back of the head to stun the cows, which would be in violation of slaughterhouse guidelines put forth by the **Canadian Food Inspection Agency**, which states, "**Do not** stun from the top of the head or behind the ears [emphasis original]," which can lead to stunning failures and "result in extreme suffering for the … animal."
- Forcing cows to watch the slaughter and processing of other cows violates best practices and guidelines from the **North American Meat Institute** and would violate the guidelines put forth by the **Canadian Veterinary Medical Association** (CVMA), which states that "methods employed must minimize fear, pain, distress and suffering."

Approximately 70,000 cows are killed in the production of more than 700,000 Wilson leather footballs every year.

Entities:
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

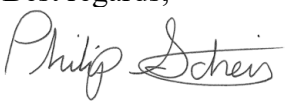
As someone who grew up in Toronto—a diehard Argos fan in the era of Joe Theismann—and as someone who cherishes the unique rules and history of the CFL, I was particularly moved watching your emotional reaction to seeing your commissioner's signature for the first name emblazoned on the CFL ball. But as one of the undercover investigators on this case, I was also saddened to know that your signature was stamped onto the skins of individuals who had suffered such a traumatizing and unnecessary death. Please imagine the cows' terror as their acute sense of smell detects the blood, and as they see their herd mates being slaughtered in front of them, realizing that's what's about to happen to them next.

CFL footballs already have many synthetic features, including synthetic bladders, laces, stitching, and pebbled texture for grip, so there is only a need to replace the ball's leather casing. Other outdoor professional sports, including the highest levels of soccer and rugby, *prefer* synthetic balls for their consistent performance, especially in adverse weather conditions. Wilson already manufactures a variety of synthetic footballs for different levels of play and so already has the technology to develop a prime-quality synthetic or plant leather football that meets or exceeds the standards of the cowskin ball.

We applaud CFL role model Brady Oliveira—winner of the Most Outstanding Player and Most Outstanding Canadian awards—who has done heroic work rescuing dogs and promoting animal welfare as an important community value. In that spirit, converting to synthetic footballs would be a positive, animal-friendly way for the CFL to align state-of-the-art football technology with humane values.

Thank you very much, and please contact me with any questions.

Best regards,



Philip Schein
Vice President of Field Research

cc: Greg Dick, CFL Chief Football Operations Officer and Rules Committee Voting Member