



August 14, 2025

Roger Goodell, Commissioner  
Richard McKay and Stephen Jones, Co-Chairs, NFL Competition Committee  
National Football League  
345 Park Ave., Fifth Floor  
New York, NY 10154

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## Re: Conversion to Synthetic Footballs

Dear Messrs. Goodell, McKay, and Jones:

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 NFL Competition Committee to convert to an elite synthetic football, effective for the start of the 2027 NFL season, after a one-year development and trial period. This would allow the NFL to collaborate with Wilson and NFL players to test and perfect the highest-performance model.

Our proposal follows PETA's recent undercover investigation into the production of leather used to manufacture official Wilson NFL footballs. You can watch the just-released investigation video [here](#).

This disturbing footage was captured at an Ohio slaughterhouse that is part of the confirmed supply chain in the manufacturing of NFL footballs, where cows were killed in full view of their frightened herd mates. The terrified cows who were next in line to be slaughtered could also see others being dismembered and skinned. When it was their turn, a slaughterer used a captive-bolt gun to deliver a concussive blow, then cut their throats, exsanguinated them, and cut their heads off. About 70,000 individual cows are killed every year in the production of 700,000 Wilson leather footballs.

Forcing cows to watch the killing and processing of other animals is cruel and in violation of best practices guidelines put forth by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the North American Meat Institute (NAMI). Furthermore, the slaughterer aimed and deployed a captive-bolt gun at the back of the cows' heads, violating guidelines put forth by AVMA and NAMI as well as those on the website of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which state that proper stunning should be done using a captive bolt to a cow's forehead because "incorrect positioning, resulting in an ineffective stun, will cause the animal to suffer pain and distress."

Other professional sports leagues and associations, including the top levels of world soccer and rugby, have left animal-skin balls behind and now use synthetic ones. These sports acknowledged the deficiencies of cowskin balls, especially

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their declining performance in wet weather, and switched to superior-performing options. The NFL Competition Committee's purpose is "to maintain competitive balance and consistency throughout the NFL." An elite synthetic football would eliminate the variability and inconsistency of cowskin footballs.

The NFL has also stated that it is measuring and working to reduce its carbon footprint; switching the 27,000 footballs produced for the NFL each year from cowskin to non-animal leather would contribute significantly to this goal. Cowskin has almost three times the negative environmental impact of its synthetic counterparts, including polyurethane leather.

Wilson already manufactures a variety of synthetic footballs for different levels of play. Even the current NFL "The Duke" leather football already has several synthetic components, including the polyurethane bladder, the polyester thread, and the PVC laces. Therefore, we have full confidence that the NFL, in partnership with Wilson, could perfect a fully synthetic football that would meet or exceed current NFL standards.

Modernizing equipment and rules has always been fundamental to the NFL. The most important progress in the NFL has been in player welfare, including Guardian Caps and protocols to mitigate traumatic concussions. Converting to a synthetic football would be another major step forward for the NFL's image, by demonstrating a humane alternative to the gratuitous violence exposed in the undercover video.

We urge you to commit to starting the development and trials as soon as possible and relegate cowskin to history, just like the inflated pig bladders that originally served as "pigskin" footballs.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me at [REDACTED] with any questions.

Sincerely,



Hannah Schein  
Vice President of Investigations and Research

Cc: Jon Runyan, NFL Vice President, Policy and Rules Administration ([REDACTED])