AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF ALL ANIMALS

PETA

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

Washington
1536 16th St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles
2624 W. Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90026
323-644-PETA

Norfolk
501 Front St.
Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-PETA

Info@peta.org
PETA.org

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Michael S. Roth
President
Wesleyan University

Dear President Roth,

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) – PETA entities have more than 10.4 million members and supporters globally, and we proudly count many Wesleyan alumni among them, including me! Last month, we spent the afternoon on campus, tabling in Usdan with a group of fantastic students, and I was delighted to find that in the ten years that have passed since I was a student there, Wesleyan students have only become more impressive, curious, empathetic, and committed to using their education to make the world a more just and equitable place. Anyone looking for hope and assurance that young people care deeply about the world around them should spend a day talking with and listening to Wesleyan students: they are an inspiring bunch.

So, we are appealing to you in the hope that you will take seriously these students' request to install a memorial plaque, outside of Usdan, to recognize and memorialize the millions of animals who were killed so that they could be served as food on campus. This project, called the "Wesleyan Animal Recognition Memorial" plaque, already has the support of *more than 100 Wesleyan students, faculty members, and alumni*, and it stems from the acknowledgment that while other animals may look different from us, they are our fellow living beings, who feel fear, pain, stress, joy, and love, who value their lives just as we value our own, and who deserve our empathy and consideration. Wesleyan teaches students the critical importance of open dialogue and asks them to examine all forms of oppression, yet, in the dining hall, it's all too easy to ignore the inarguable suffering of the cows, chickens, pigs, and other animals who are confined on industrial factory farms, abused, exploited, and killed before they end up on our plates.

Back when I was at Wesleyan, I studied the civil rights and workers' rights movements, and today, in classrooms across campus, students continue to study and celebrate past social movements that expanded our circles of empathy and moral concern. But history stretches onward, and thoughtful, committed students like those on your campus have already started writing the next chapter, urging us to give greater consideration to other species and advocating for animal rights. As Wesleyan students have argued –as in this *Argus* article from earlier this week – recognizing that the lives of animals matter is the first step toward this moral progress.

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

Over the last few years, you have been among the most vocal champions of free expression on college campuses, and you've convincingly made the case that universities, particularly liberal arts schools, need to welcome diversity of thought and expose students to challenging ideas and concepts. The Wesleyan Animal Recognition Memorial does exactly that: it is a conversation starter that invites everyone on campus to consider the lives of animals, who are often overlooked and dismissed, and recognize the impact that our daily choices have on them. It is a reminder that all of us have the chance to get on the right side of history by rejecting a speciesist worldview that deludes us into believing that violence, exploitation, and abuse are acceptable so long as the victims don't look like us.

Some students will find the plaque enlightening, others will find it challenging, and inevitably, some will read the plaque's inscription and feel uncomfortable. The project of bridging the gap between our values and our behavior is invariably a challenge, but it's also a responsibility. We can begin to meet that responsibility by encouraging people to recognize that animals feel fear and pain just as we do, that our actions have consequences, and that all of us, each day, can make the decision to choose compassion over cruelty.

We're urging you to please allow the Wesleyan Animal Recognition Memorial to be installed in Usdan. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jakob Shaw
Manager, Strategic Initiatives