



CENTER FOR A HUMANE ECONOMY  
KARNER BLUE

animal  
wellness  
action

January 20, 2020

Mr. Kasper Rorsted  
Chief Executive Officer  
adidas AG  
Adi-Dassler-Strasse 1  
91074 Herzogenaurach  
Germany

Dear Mr. Rorsted:

On behalf of the Center for a Humane Economy, the Animal Wellness Foundation, Animal Wellness Action, and investment advisor Karner Blue Capital, I am writing to urge you to discontinue the sale of all athletic shoes containing kangaroo skin within a reasonable period of time. Continuing to source skins from kangaroos shot in their native habitats in Australia represents a growing reputational risk to your company. Conversely, shedding these skins from your product line offers an opportunity for the world to see adidas' commitment to promoting wildlife protection, fighting climate change, and embracing sustainability and innovation.

Several of our organizations have lauded your company's move away from leather and toward synthetic, plant-based and recycled materials for your athletic shoes. Your work forging materials from recycled ocean plastics presents adidas in the best light, turning an environmental threat into a business opportunity and choosing not to use raw materials that contribute to animal slaughter or to the volume of petroleum-based goods.

Yet this tremendous progress in shifting toward more humane and sustainable materials for shoes is undermined, to a degree, when people learn of adidas' use of kangaroo leather.

To that point, people throughout the world have been stunned by the scale of death and destruction caused by the wildfires in Australia. One prominent Queensland scientist estimated that more than a billion individual mammals, birds, and reptiles have perished. With the fires still ablaze, that body count will rise. The surviving animals face displacement from their known habitats, food and water shortages, and other threats.

Along with koalas, Australia's iconic kangaroos have become a face of the country's catastrophic inferno. We've all witnessed gut-wrenching images in the news and on social media of these marsupials being killed, injured or orphaned by the fire, often accompanied by stories of people struggling to rescue them. Citizens throughout the world have donated tens of millions of dollars to help Australia's wildlife. Throngs of people are volunteering at rescue centers. There's even an army of crafters sewing "joey pouches" for orphaned kangaroos, with over 100,000 people rallying on a Facebook group offering templates and tips.

To a considerable degree, the fires are a crisis of our own making, with human actions contributing to more intense and life-threatening conditions for animals and people. These magnified weather events are not the consequence of intentional acts of harm against people or nature. They are the manifestation of countless cumulative business and consumer decisions focused on short-term goals. Even so, many people are rightfully calling for changes to the way we conduct business, seeking to adopt a more conscious consumerism to help prevent recurring catastrophes.

On the other hand, individuals and businesses are also killing animals intentionally. Australia's government and a small number of its citizens collectively undertake the largest slaughter of terrestrial wildlife in the world by killing millions of kangaroos every year. A major driver of this killing is the commercial use of kangaroo parts, mainly soccer cleats for adidas and a handful of others in the industry.

This is a timely moment for adidas to announce the end of its use of kangaroos in soccer cleats and sports footwear as a way of demonstrating concern for kangaroos and continuing its shift towards non-animal materials. Diadora and Versace recently agreed to stop using kangaroo leather. But as the largest consumer of kangaroo skins in the world, adidas can make the biggest impact.

With the fires expected to burn for months, kangaroos face enormous pressure and hardships. The adidas criteria prohibiting "the use of leathers, hides or skins from animals that have been inhumanely treated, whether these animals are wild or farmed" is unlikely to be met. Until a census can be taken of the surviving kangaroos, it's impossible to know if the adidas policy of not "sourcing or processing raw materials from any endangered or threatened species" is being violated.

In times of drought, over half of Australia's kangaroos can perish. Although the full extent of the fires' effects on the kangaroo population is unknown, the state of New South Wales recently announced that it will *not* postpone commercial kangaroo killing. For adidas to announce that it will not contribute to additional suffering by providing financial incentives for kangaroo hunters, the company will win plaudits around the world.

adidas has been fending off concerns for years about the use of kangaroos in its supply chain. Over the decades there have been protests, petitions, boycotts, campaigns, court cases, investor pressure, legislation won and lost, and innumerable news stories and magazine articles on the issue. When the pressure has been greatest, adidas has announced concessions, only to walk back on them later.

Activists remain focused on kangaroo consumption, rather than adidas' achievements like creating polyester from plastic bottles, nylon from fishing nets and polystyrene from old food packaging. They should be celebrating Parley sportswear (made from upcycled marine plastic), the 100% recyclable Future Loop running shoe, or your Hazardous Chemicals and Better Cotton initiatives. But as kangaroos hold a powerful symbolic connection to humans, the continued use of their skins undermines adidas' environmental credibility.

Discontinuing kangaroo leather products would direct consumers who value quality footwear to adidas' other high-performance, high-tech alternatives, whether synthetic (e.g., HybridTouch, SprintSkin, Primeknit) or sustainable (e.g., Reebok NPC UK Cotton and Corn shoes or Yeezy algae-based runners).

Beyond Australia's catastrophic wildfires, passions for kangaroos are sure to be stirred by a new and searing documentary, "Kangaroo – A Love Hate Story." This graphic and devastating treatment of the issue emphatically dispels the myths of kangaroo overpopulation, a robust market for kangaroo meat, and a humanely conducted hunt. It makes clear the role of soccer shoes in the kangaroos' plight.

Additionally, manufacturers and retailers selling kangaroo cleats in California – the largest soccer market in the United States – can expect pushback and criminal penalties as activists urge authorities to enforce the state's ban on kangaroo products, reinstated four years ago. (Copa 19s are readily available throughout the state.)

This intersection of the devastating Australian wildfires, heightened concern for kangaroos, and rising passions for animal protection presents adidas with an incredibly relevant opportunity to demonstrate its sensitivity to sustainability and humane practices, by announcing and enforcing an end to the use of kangaroo skins in adidas footwear. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Pacelle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wayne Pacelle  
*President, Center for a Humane Economy*