

Item 20

Proposal

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals requests that H&M recommits to the company's 2018 policy prohibiting the use of mohair. Additionally, we encourage the Board to consider developing a plan to phase out all remaining animal-derived materials.

Background

In 2018, H&M Group announced a ban on mohair after a PETA Asia investigation in South Africa showed workers dragging goats by the horns and legs and lifting them off the floor by their tails. Shearers cut off swaths of skin, left goats bleeding from the face and ears, offered no pain relief, and threw the animals across the wooden floor. As a result of footage provided by PETA, several farmers were charged with cruelty to animals under South Africa's Animals Protection Act.

Despite abundant evidence that abuse is endemic to the industry, H&M reversed its position in 2020 and began sourcing mohair from farms certified by the so-called Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS). This and other bare minimum standards were created as a result of PETA entities' investigations exposing extreme cruelty, and farms that use them have been exposed dozens of times in countries around the world.

Last year, investigators visited multiple RMS-certified farms and several supplying BKB Ltd., the world's largest supplier of RMS mohair and an H&M partner. The cruelty found on RMS farms was the same as the previous investigation: workers dragged goats by their ears, horns, tails, legs, and fleece; and struck, jabbed, whipped, and poked goats in the face and back using brooms and poles. Many goats appeared emaciated. At a facility supplying BKB, the bodies of several dead goats were found discarded in a heap. PETA Asia has submitted evidence of animal welfare violations to relevant officials in South Africa and Lesotho.

H&M Group publicly states, "No animals should be harmed in the making of our product." Yet both PETA Asia investigations reveal extreme harm to animals, which violates the company's animal welfare policy, RMS requirements, and local animal welfare laws.

Summary

H&M Group has a clear opportunity, indeed an obligation, to course-correct and uphold its animal welfare commitments. The company recently faced intense public scrutiny amidst charges of greenwashing. Humane washing – misrepresenting the treatment of animals as more ethical, compassionate, or "humane" than it truly is – represents an analogous reputational and legal risk. H&M Group can avert future negative repercussions while upholding its promise to act ethically, transparently, and responsibly by reinstating its ban on mohair and developing a plan to phase out all remaining animal-derived materials.