



Case Report

1	Case Number	0161/10
2	Advertiser	Nature's Organics
3	Product	House goods/services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	28/04/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.2 - Violence Cruelty to animals

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The TV advertisement shows animated aquatic animals such as a starfish, stingray, duck, squid, crab and octopus being used as cleaning products. End image 'Stop torturing our aquatic life. Clean with earth choice.

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

Although the animals were animated - i was offended to see a duck held by it's tail and feet to be used as a toilet duck cleaner as well the other animals used in horrible ways in a means to visualise there point. ALthough a valuable point to make to use safer products down our drains - the graphic and mis-use of animals in advertisements is NOT the way to go about it. At first my daughters (aged 12 and 14) and I thought it was an ad for a cleaning product to show how dirty your sponge could be. Then when the pictures became more diverse we didn't know what it was advertising. When the ad showed the man with the live duck over the toilet we were all horrified and my younger daughter was distressed. I put the mute button on for the volume but continued to watch the ad. When the words came up about torture to aquatic animals I turned up the volume to see who the advertiser was but that was not stated. I would not like to view this ad again becasue I was offended by the needless portrayal of cruelty to animals. Who made this ad and who authorised it? It was disgusting and upsetting.

The advertisement is far too graphic. No one should have to see an octopus squeezed and used as a mop or a stingray cleaning a shower. It is also in a timeslot that children would be watching. In my opinion they have stepped way over an acceptable line.

I was horrified when I first saw this ad as most little boys have hermit crabs; I am mortified at the thought of the ad giving them the idea to pore cleaning products into their shells. I think they could have approached the ad campaign in a more humane way. The way these poor animals (computer generated or not) are betrayed is appalling.

This advertisement is distressing to watch particularly for a 5 year old who loves marine animal life and is an un-ethical method of increasing profits. It depicts animal cruelty in a very graphic and disturbing way and I don't want to see that every second ad break.

The advertisement was offence. Animal cruelty was a major factor. However it was sickening to watch and made me feel extremely unwell.

Since when are realistic portrayals of animal cruelty and torture acceptable in any medium? I felt physically ill viewing this advert. My young daughter was in hysterics we're still trying to calm her down. I don't care that the animals were cgi. this ad is just plain sick. We were loyal brand supporters but no more. the very thought of seeing a that logo again brings to mind the disturbing cruelty that this advert portrays.

I am a supporter of the product as it is environmentally friendly but find the ad itself offensive to the point I have to turn the television off when it comes on on any of the stations. It depicts women at home using animals to clean floors toilets etc... I am obviously aware they aren't real animals but they look real and any animal lover would find this ad really distressing.

I have never felt the need to complain about any ad and I feel I am very liberal in my outlook but in this instance my children aged 7 and 11 were very distressed by the ad and I also found the ad to be a little disturbing. I feel strongly about teaching my children to be kind and compassionate to animals and my youngest child in particular was very troubled after seeing this ad. He spent the rest of the evening asking why the squid was being squeezed and asking was it real and did it hurt the animals.

I realise that as a parent it is also my responsibility to ensure my children are not exposed to harmful messages on television but I was not aware of this ad until yesterday evening and so had no opportunity to prevent my children from seeing it particularly as it was screened in a time slot that I was comfortable letting my children view.

I was deeply offended by this ad because it showed a cruelty to the creatures involved. It would not make me go out and specifically buy Earth Choice products... instead it would cause me to change the channel until the ad is over. I think the ad is sick.. Surely there are other ways they (Earth Choice) can advertise against the harming of marine animals. I would like to see this ad removed ASAP from television screens altogether. It is sickening to me and my family.

My kids were really upset by the fact they looked to be hurting the animals...My 6 year old asked me why they were hurting the hermit crab and started crying...Kids don't understand that they may have been computer generated as they look ""real"". Kids have enough reality surrounding them everyday...murders accidents and wars are the norm if they see a newsflash..they don't need to be subjected to an insensitive ad as well.

My teenage children (and myself) found the images of animals being tortured in this way extremely disturbing.

The reasons I am offended by this advertisement is that it shows abuse of animals to anyone who is watching the advertisement. I did take into account that the it is to improve environmental awareness of pollutants finding their way into waterways but this is clearly not the best way to advertise. It not only deeply disturbed me but many of my friends who also saw the advertisement and I would like you to please consider taking it off the air.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

At Natures Organics, we are passionate about the environment and animal welfare. That is why we make products to the very highest environmental standards. The aim of everything we do is to reduce the harm that people cause to the environment, including animal life.

We strongly believe that our products, while not perfect, are a good choice for any householder who cares about the environment and wishes to minimize the harmful effects that their cleaning products have.

Specifically, the complaints you have received fall under Section 2.2 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics. This section reads as follows:

Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.

While our commercial does show simulated violence being inflicted on aquatic animals featured, we strongly believe that the context justifies this. Indeed, the entire point is to dramatise the harm that is being done to animals by other cleaning products. The commercial ends with a line that encourages people to reduce this harm: "Stop torturing our aquatic life. Clean with Earth Choice."

Yes, we've created a confronting commercial. We wanted people to understand that what goes down their drains eventually ends up in our waterways and oceans, where the chemicals cause harm to aquatic life. We wanted to make people stop and think about this. We believe that our commercial achieves that aim.

But while we set out to make a commercial that would have an impact, it was certainly never our intention to offend or upset anybody. We sincerely regret that this has occurred.

I would also like to make the point that the commercial was shot with heavy use of computer imagery. All of the aquatic animals featured, with the exception of the duck, were computer-generated models. The duck was real, and was accompanied on set by its trained handler, who ensured its welfare at all times.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ('the Board') considered whether the advertisement met the requirements of the AANA Code for Ethics.

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement is distressing in its depiction of animals being used as cleaning tools.

The Board noted that the images are computer generated images (with the exception of the duck which was accompanied by an animal handler and not harmed) and that they are quite realistic in appearance. The Board considered that the message of the advertisement - to use an environmentally friendly product, was relevant to the images used in the advertisement. The Board considered that, although visually confronting, the advertisement's message provided a context for the depictions and that the advertisement did not breach section 2.3 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds the Board dismissed the complaints.