



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 65/08 |
| 2. Advertiser | Sunbeam Corporation Ltd |
| 3. Product | Housegoods/services |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Violence Other – section 2.2 |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 12 March 2008 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement opens on a young woman, wearing only black pants and bra, ironing a dress. She leaves the dress on the ironing board and walks away to put on makeup. Her cat leaves the chair where it has been watching her and jumps onto the ironing board, to sit on the dress. Suddenly a shot of steam is emitted from the iron causing the cat to jump off the ironing board onto the floor.

THE COMPLAINT

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

What I object to is the cruelty towards the cat with the jet of steam which could hurt it, and also that this could be copied by people to point an iron and use hot stem towards cats in real life.

Whilst the woman herself did not spray the cat with hot steam, I think it could give young kids or teenagers twisted ideas on cruel ways to torture animals. My immediate reaction was of horror and I have never been prompted to complain about any advertisement before now.

I am concerned about the message this ad sends about the way to treat animals humanely and kindly. I think there is potential for young people to think it is okay to try to harm their cat or try to recreate the ad in their home. There are so many upsetting cases of cruelty to animals in the media, especially towards cats/kittens, that I think this ad displays little sensitivity to an important issue. I understand it is supposed to be funny but I think using a real cat and showing it being blasted with hot steam is wrong.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

We are writing to you in response to the letters of complaint you have received regarding the current television commercial for Sunbeam irons.

While we understand the commercial has offended these viewers, it was not our intention to do so. We intended to communicate our iron message, "protect your investment in fashion", in a light-hearted way that consumers could relate to.

Sunbeam values its reputation as a leading marketer and undertakes all projects with due care and responsibility. As such, we would never condone the mistreatment of animals and can assure you that the cat was not endangered in making the commercial and every care was taken in its production.

Two professional cat handlers were present throughout the shoot to ensure that the cat was treated well, fed, watered and rested at regular intervals. The cat featured in the commercial is professionally trained for advertising purposes, so it is accustomed to being on a film set, surrounded by lights, camera equipment and people.

The 'steam' scene in the commercial was filmed in two parts and later pieced together, so at no time was the cat on the ironing board while the iron was switched on. A light spray of air was used to encourage the cat to jump off the ironing board, as recommended by the cat handler. The steam effect coming from the iron was added in post production.

We hope that this will assure viewers that the cat did not come to any harm during the filming of the commercial. We believe that most people will recognise the humour intended in the ad, and it will in no way encourage the mistreatment of animals.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board considered whether the cat was harmed in any way by the steam issuing from the iron. It noted that the iron did spray the steam directly over the cat or even towards the cat. The iron hissed the steam into the air in a general direction. The aim was to scare the cat without harming it in any way.

The Board further noted that the iron hissed at the cat itself. They considered that this created an element of fantasy as irons do not operate on their own. There was no element of cruelty towards the cat by humans as there were no humans in the shot during the steam hiss.

The Board noted that whilst the advertiser's response reassured the Board that the cat had not been harmed in any way during the making of the advertisement it not address the concerns of the complainant. However the Board considered that the advertiser could not be held responsible for any cruelty to animals as this was not a behaviour modelled in the advertisement.

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