

Case Report

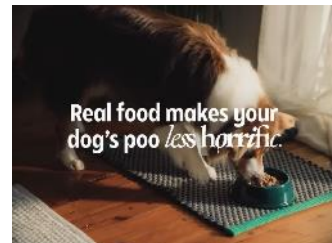
Case number: 0029-26
Advertiser: Lyka Pet Food
Medium: TV - On Demand
Decision date: 11-Feb-2026
Decision: No breach

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY PANEL

- AANA Code of Ethics - 2.1 Discrimination or Vilification - no breach
- AANA Code of Ethics - 2.3 Violence - no breach

AD DESCRIPTION

This On Demand TV ad is titled 'The Brutal Pick-up. A dog poo horror story'. It features scenes where a dog owner has to clean up runny dog faeces on a sidewalk, and includes glimpses of the faeces, and the owner screaming in horror. In the end, she feeds her dog Lyka, and states 'Real food makes your dog's poo less horrific. Switch to Lyka.'



SUMMARY

Complaints

Complaints were received on the grounds that this ad was disgusting and should not be shown during family time.

Some complainants objected on the basis that the ad was frightening and caused distress to children who see it.

Some complainants argued that the ad was discriminatory and demeaning, because the dog owner who is forced to pick up runny dog faeces was of Asian descent.

Advertiser response

The advertiser responded that a key benefit of feeding Lyka is optimised gut health and digestion, and this is often reflected through improved stool consistency. This theme is central

to the product benefit being communicated. The ad uses an everyday pet parent reality to highlight a positive health outcome that can result from feeding Lyka.

While there being 'disgusting' does not constitute a breach of the advertising codes, it has taken consumer feedback onboard and has reduced the duration of the scene that shows the runny stool dramatically.

Dealing with the allegation that the ad is violent and scary for children, it argued that there is no violence but acknowledged that younger children might respond to the audio used to parody typical horror movies. It is mindful of this and deliberately works with media partners to target the ad at adults aged 25 and older.

Finally, it argued that there is no racial discrimination. The lead actress portrays the role of a dog owner in a neutral and common scenario.

A copy of the advertiser's full response is included as Appendix A.

Decisions

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the material was gross and disgusting. The Panel acknowledged that some members of the community may find the imagery unpleasant. However, the Panel considered that being 'gross', 'disgusting' or generally offensive was not a matter which fell within the advertising Codes.

The Panel found that the ad did not breach section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics as the ad did not depict anything that could be considered to discriminate or vilify anyone on the basis of race or ethnicity.

The Panel also found that the ad did not breach section 2.3 of the AANA Code as the menace depicted did not rise to a level that constituted violence.

ASSESSMENT AND DECISIONS

Section 2.1 (AANA Code of Ethics): Advertising shall not portray people or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.

The Practice Note defines discrimination and vilification as follows:

- **Discrimination:** unfair or less favourable treatment.
- **Vilification:** Humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule.

Panel assessment

The Panel considered that the dreadful task of cleaning up after a dog with loose stools is one that dog owners typically face at one point or another. The Panel considered that nothing in the ad suggests that the owner is subjected to less favourable treatment or is being humiliated on the basis of her race or ethnicity.

The Panel considered that she could just as well have been from any other ethnicity without impacting or changing the overall story portrayed. The Panel considered that this negates any argument that her ethnicity is being vilified or discriminated against.

Furthermore, the Panel considered that no reasonable person would think less of, or start ridiculing people of Asian descent as a consequence of viewing this ad. As such, the Panel considered that the ad did not discriminate against or vilify any person or section of the community on the basis of race or ethnicity.

Panel decision

The Panel found that the ad did not breach section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

Section 2.3 (AANA Code of Ethics): Advertising shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.

The Practice Note defines discrimination and vilification as follows:

In considering whether the violence or menace depicted in an advertisement is justifiable, the Community Panel may have regard to the audience of the advertisement. Graphic depictions of violence or a strong suggestion of menace have been found to present violence in an unacceptable manner especially when visible to a broad audience which includes children.

Panel assessment

The Panel considered that the complainants raised a concern that the ad was scary for children. The Panel considered the Advertiser's response that this was meant to parody the horror genre and considered that young children may not necessarily realise this. The Panel acknowledged that the narrative might be somewhat ominous, but that it did not rise to a level that could be considered violence.

The Panel considered that the dog owner's scream when she accidentally gets some of her dog's runny stool on her hand is in keeping with the overall storyline and could be seen as representative of any dog owner's feelings when this happens. The Panel considered that the ad presents a solution to this dilemma, and depicts a 'happy ending' when concluding the story.

The Panel considered that no violence is depicted against an animal or against another human in the ad.

Panel decision

The Panel found that the ad did not breach section 2.3 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Panel found that the ad did not breach any other section of the advertising codes.

APPENDIX A: ADVERTISER RESPONSE IN FULL

Lyka acknowledges the complaints received and appreciates the opportunity to respond. We take concerns about audience experience seriously.

1) Context and changes made to the creative

Lyka acknowledged community and Ad Standards feedback received in late 2025 around concerns of the advertisement being “disgusting”. While disgust doesn’t breach any guidelines, we took action and significantly reduced the duration and prominence of the loose stool imagery and removed certain shots entirely. This was done to be more mindful of the viewing audience and to reduce the likelihood of the content being experienced as overly graphic or unpleasant.

2) Relevance of the theme to the product being advertised

While some viewers have described the advertisement as “gross” or unpleasant, stool quality is a genuine and widely recognised indicator of digestive health in dogs.

A key benefit of feeding Lyka is optimised gut health and digestion, and this is often reflected through improved stool consistency. This theme is central to the product benefit being communicated: the advertisement uses an everyday pet parent reality to highlight a positive health outcome that can result from feeding Lyka. Lyka considers this message to be relevant and connected directly to the product being advertised.

3) Response to the issue raised under AANA Code of Ethics, Section 2.1 (Discrimination)

The advertisement does not reference race, rely on racial stereotypes, or depict any group in a demeaning or discriminatory manner. The portrayal of the lead actress reflects a neutral depiction of a pet parent in a common scenario. Lyka submits that Section 2.1 is not applicable.

4) Response to the issue raised under AANA Code of Ethics, Section 2.3 (Violence)

The issues raised in the complaints refer primarily to disgust, bodily waste imagery, and a horror-themed execution, which in our opinion, doesn’t appear in breach of sections 2.3

Lyka submits that the advertisement does not contain violence, nor does it depict or imply the consequences of violence.

The advertisement depicts a dog relieving itself during a walk, and a pet owner attempting to clean it up. While some viewers have described the content as disgusting, the depiction of dog faeces and the implied inconvenience of cleaning it up is not violence. It is presented as a common, non-violent scenario with a stylised and comedic tone.

For these reasons, Lyka submits the advertisement does not breach Section 2.3 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

5) Concerns raised about children and general audience viewing

Lyka acknowledges that one complainant stated the advertisement frightened their children, and others raised concerns about the time of day and family viewing context.

Lyka notes the creative is not intended to be overtly scary, and is designed as a parody of horror conventions with exaggerated reactions rather than frightening imagery. There are no depictions of violence, injury, or danger. However, Lyka recognises that some children may still be sensitive to suspenseful audio cues or the horror parody tone.

To mitigate the risk of unintended exposure, Lyka's media buying strategy is planned against an adult audience (25+), and Lyka continues to work with media partners to place the advertisement in programming where the intended audience is more likely to be viewing.

6) Conclusion

Lyka respectfully submits that the advertisement does include racial discrimination and therefore does not breach Section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics. Similarly, the advertisement does not include violence and therefore does not breach Section 2.3 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

Lyka acknowledges and respects that some viewers may find the imagery unpleasant or inappropriate for meal times, and we have acted on feedback previously by reducing the duration and intensity of the stool-related visuals while maintaining the central product benefit message of improved digestive health.

Lyka appreciates the Panel's consideration of this response.