



LANGUAGE CHECKLIST

This checklist is based on Animal Think Tank's *Language Mini Guide* and social science research. Use it as a quick reference guide for crafting communications and planning campaigns. Where possible, test what works with your audience to know if it resonates.

Highlight shared values and an inspiring vision

- Does the message foreground what we're for (freedom, kindness, dignity, community), not just what we're against (ending cruelty, reducing suffering)?
- Are we inviting people into a better future for all of us, rather than centring an end to harm as the entire vision?

Quick check: If someone only reads the first line, would they understand the values or vision we stand for?

Connect with people's identities and create a 'bigger us'

- Are we using inclusive identity language - e.g. 'people who care about animals', 'animal lovers', 'concerned communities'?
- Have we avoided labels that can trigger defensiveness or 'us vs. them' thinking - e.g. 'meat eaters', 'non-vegans', 'vegans', 'activists'?

Quick check: Would this language help a person who already cares about animals feel included, rather than judged or positioned as an outsider?

Centre animals as individuals and use animal-first language

- Are animals described as someone, not something - individuals with feelings, relationships, desires?
- Is industry language avoided? - e.g. 'mother' or 'cow' rather than 'dairy cow'; 'hen' rather than 'egg layers'; or 'cow' rather than 'beef cattle'?
- Do we put animals first, not the role imposed on them - e.g. 'animal companions' rather than 'companion animals'; 'horses who are raced' rather than 'racehorses'; 'animals confined in zoos' rather than 'zoo animals'?
- Are we using language that builds connection - e.g. 'families' and 'communities', rather than 'populations' or 'species'; 'sharing animals' stories' rather than 'a voice for the voiceless'?

Quick check: Have you made it easier for the audience to picture animals as individuals with lives of their own - not as categories or 'products'?



Use active language that makes harm visible

- Do we use phrasing that makes clear someone is doing something to someone else - e.g. 'the industry kills billions of animals every year for profit' rather than 'billions of animals die every year'?
- Are we choosing clear verbs - e.g. 'testing on animals', rather than 'animal testing'; 'farming animals' rather than 'animal farming'; 'racing dogs' rather than 'dog racing', when possible?

Quick check: Does our language make clear that these are choices being made - not natural or inevitable systems?

Avoid reinforcing industry framing

- Have we replaced industry euphemisms with truthful language - e.g. 'killing healthy animals' rather than 'culling'; 'cutting off animals' tails' rather than 'tail-docking'; 'confining cows in sheds' rather than 'housing cows'?
- Are we reframing words that describe reality more truthfully - e.g. 'separating families' rather than 'calf weaning'; 'calf cages' rather than 'veal crates'?

Quick check: Do any of the words in our message accidentally make exploitation feel normal, traditional or necessary?

Centre animals' agency and dignity

- Do we avoid describing animals as 'voiceless' or only as passive victims?
- Where possible, do we show them as resisting harm, seeking safety, being parents, having a social circle, living joyful lives?
- Are we using language that individualises - e.g. pronouns like she/he/they/who, rather than 'it' or 'that')?

Quick check: Would a reader come away feeling connection and empathy, not pity?

Reminder:

This is a habit-building tool to expand your language toolbox - not 'one right way' to communicate. Save the rewrites that work into your team style guide.

Unsure how to apply this to your comms messaging?

Have a comment about this checklist?

Contact us for a quick chat or drop us a line on the [Slack #ask channel](#).

