

January 21, 2010

Bill Deeley  
President  
The Punxsutawney Groundhog Club  
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**Via e-mail:**

Dear Mr. Deeley,

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 2 million members and supporters worldwide. We would like to present you with an exciting, innovative proposal—one that would benefit both Punxsutawney *and* Punxsutawney Phil. Please review the following information and then make the compassionate decision to use an animatronic Phil and retire the live groundhogs who are used for Groundhog Day activities to a sanctuary.

To most people, Groundhog Day—celebrated annually on February 2—is a welcome midwinter diversion, but Punxsutawney Phil is forced to be on display year round at the local library and is denied the ability to prepare for and enter yearly hibernation. These normally shy animals—who are constantly on alert when they are out of their burrows—become stressed when they are exposed to large, screaming crowds; flashing lights from perhaps hundreds of cameras; and human handling.

The popularity of using technologically advanced electromechanical devices such as animatronic animals instead of live animals is rising. Performances such as "Walking With Dinosaurs, the Live Experience"—a theatrical show in which animatronic dinosaurs roar, stomp, and chase each other around an arena—have been taking audiences by storm. Other popular exhibitions have featured robotic penguins and dolphins who swim and communicate just like real animals do, and we think that an animatronic groundhog would similarly mesmerize a crowd full of curious spectators in Punxsutawney.

Tradition is no excuse for cruelty, and this opportunity would allow Punxsutawney to engage in a futuristic, interactive, versatile, and humane annual event. We would be happy to make recommendations for both a sanctuary that would welcome Punxsutawney Phil and the other Punxsutawney groundhogs and a company that could make an animatronic Phil. May we please hear that non-animal alternatives will be used for Groundhog Day celebrations in Punxsutawney next year? I can be reached at XX or XX. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gemma Vaughan, MSW  
Animals in Entertainment Specialist