

June 10, 2019

Nicola Osborne Deputy Managing Director Usborne Publishing

Via e-mail: [mail@usbornebooksathome.co.uk](mailto:mail@usbornebooksathome.co.uk)

Dear Ms. Osborne,

I'm writing both as a mother and on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and PETA UK and our more than 8.5 million members and supporters combined worldwide, including many in the United Kingdom, with regard to Usborne Publishing's much-loved *That's Not My ...* children's book series. We applaud Fiona Watt's award-winning work, which has undoubtedly sparked children's interest in animals worldwide. To ensure that this interest develops into empathy, we urge editors to update the series to refer to animal characters using the personal pronouns "he" and "she" rather than the inanimate "it." As you know, words matter. The wrong choice of words can send a mixed message to even the youngest of readers about the relationship between humans and other animals and the importance of empathy.

The way we talk about animals must adapt to reflect a more modern understanding of them. By making this change, you would be encouraging your readers and their families to think about the language they use and how it might perpetuate negative attitudes toward animals. For example, as the series currently exists, animal characters such as the frog, hamster, and lamb share the pronoun "it" with the tractor and car, suggesting that the animals are inanimate objects rather than living beings with feelings. Teaching children from a young age to use inclusive language is one step toward a feeling of empathy for all sentient beings.

My baby daughter received a copy of *That's Not My Elephant*, and she loves to explore each page as I read the words to her. However, as I'm reading, I say, "His feet are too squashy" or "Her tail is too tufty"—as I want my daughter to grow up knowing that animals are not inanimate objects—they are not "its"—and there are many parents today who feel this way.

It's time to raise our standards of compassion so that children will understand that all animals are living, feeling beings just like they are—not things. Because you're a leader in children's literature, we urge you and your staff to begin referring to animals as animate beings—"he" and "she"—in all future publications. By providing all animal characters in the *That's Not My ...* series with equal status, regardless of their species, Usborne will help nurture a kinder, more compassionate generation of readers and set an important and vital example for the rest of the publishing world.

Thank you for your consideration. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Marta Holmberg  
Senior Director