

No milk for Maher in newest PETA ad

Client: People for the ethical treatment of animals (PETA), (Norfolk, VA)

PR Team: In-house

Campaign: Mobile Billboard Anti-Milk Campaign

Time Frame: October 3-8, 2000

Budget: \$5,000

Got milk? Well you'd better dump it out quick and wipe off that white mustache before People for The Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and Bill Maher walk in the room. PETA recently dressed up the *Politically Incorrect* pundit Maher as an oversized baby in a diaper and bonnet for the latest battle in its ongoing anti-milk crusade. To encourage parents to remove cow's milk from their children's diet, PETA plastered Maher's mug on a daunting mobile advertisement. The billboard made its debut early last month outside the World Dairy Expo in Wisconsin before embarking on a four-day romp through downtown Madison.

Strategy

While the dairy industry spends upwards of \$300 million annually to promote milk, PETA has to do more with less.

A PETA member for several years, Bill Maher easily made the transition to anti-milk poster boy. "As soon as he became aware of the connection between the veal and dairy industries, he wanted to get involved," says PETA campaign coordinator Sean Gifford.

"I can find humor in just about anything, but cruelty to animals is never funny," said Maher at a press briefing.

One of PETA's first jobs at

the dairy industry was the now famous New York City ad campaign "Got Prostate Cancer?" The ads featured Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and illustrated the alleged correlation between cow's milk and prostate cancer. The campaign generated coverage by *The Today Show*, MSNBC, CNN, *Fox National News*, *Court TV* and every major US newspaper, as well as more than 50 radio stations.

A gentler campaign followed. "Got Veal?" featured a forlorn baby calf in a veal crate. But apparently the soft-shoe approach wasn't very effective. "This effort garnered little coverage. So now we're switching back," says Gifford.

For its latest campaign, PETA selected Wisconsin. With "America's Dairyland" as the state motto, pushing an anti-milk agenda there was hardly easy. Nonetheless, PETA debuted its mobile Maher billboard in Milwaukee on October 3 in the parking lot of USA Baby, the state's largest baby supply store, hoping to get new mothers' attention.

Later, the billboard was taken for a nine-hour drive through downtown Milwaukee before beginning a four-day gig circling the World Dairy Exposition in Madison for nine hours each day.

"Sometimes we take flak, but we're not here to win popularity contests; we're here to get the word out about animal suffering," Gifford said.

Tactics

Distributing unpleasant literature is one tactic. In this case the materials included a description of what farmers call the "rape rack," a process that involves artificially inseminating cows to keep milk production high.

PETA hired the Mobile

Media Group, based in Tierra Verde, FL, to install a 22-by-10-foot billboard on both sides of one of its custom-built trucks.

PETA then sent news releases to all Milwaukee and Madison media outlets (TV, print and radio) the day before debuting the ad in each city. It also mailed a glossy of the ad to Milwaukee and Madison media outlets (TV and print) before the event.

The MilkSucks.com site used the slogan "Make your baby happy - breast-feed" to draw people to a page displaying the PETA ad, and offering summaries of the scientific studies linking milk to colic, diabetes and ear infections in children.

Results

Though not exactly the media storm PETA stirred with its "Got Prostate?" campaign, this stunt was well worth its meager \$5,000 price tag.

In Milwaukee, the local Fox, CBS and ABC affiliates covered the story, and other affiliate stations in Indiana, Kansas and Arizona picked up the coverage. Fox national also ran the story, and two local radio stations called for interviews.

In Madison, the local CBS, ABC and NBC affiliates covered the story, and three local radio stations conducted interviews. Gifford said thousands of pieces of literature were distributed.

PR reps for the World Dairy Expo would not return calls seeking comment.

Future

"We think it's telling that this billboard, which was a softer approach, didn't garner the enormous play we usually get," says Gifford. "Don't expect such a soft approach next time around."

Craig McGuire

MAKE YOUR BABY HAPPY

BREAST FEED

COW'S MILK IS LINKED TO EAR INFECTIONS, COLIC, AND DIABETES.

BILL MAHER FOR PETA MilkSucks.com

Maher... at home in a bonnet and diaper for PETA's sake