1	Jessica L. Blome (State Bar No. 314898) Christian R. Bucey (State Bar No. PL-465486) GREENFIRE LAW, PC P.O. Box 8055 Berkeley, CA 94710 Ph/Fx: (510) 900-9502		
2			
3			
4			
5	Email: jblome@greenfirelaw.com cbucey@greenfirelaw.com		
6	Kathryn (Kate) Schultz		
7	(Oregon Bar No. 221174; New York Bar No. 5417639) The Center for a Humane Economy P.O. Box 30845 Bethesda, MD 20824		
8			
9			
10	Email: kate@centerforahumaneeconomy.org  Pro hac vice application pending		
11			
12	Attorneys for Plaintiff		
13			
14	SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA		
15	FOR THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE		
16			
17 18	ANIMAL WELLNESS ACTION and the CENTER FOR A HUMANE ECONOMY,	) Case No.:	
19	Plaintiff,	COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF	
20	vs.	)	
21		Cal. Bus. Prof. Code, § 17200 et seq.	
22	SOCCER WEARHOUSE, INC.,	)	
23		) )	
24	Defendant.	)	
25	Plaintiffs ANIMAL WELLNESS AC	— TION and the CENTER FOR A HIJMANE	
26	Plaintiffs ANIMAL WELLNESS ACTION and the CENTER FOR A HUMANE		
27	ECONOMY bring this action on its own behalf and on behalf of the general public, to require defendant to comply with Penal Code section 6530 (hereafter Section 6530), which prohibits the		
28	describing to comply with renar code section c	osso therearer section 0330), which promotes the	
		1 -	

COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

commercial importation, possession with intent to sell, and sale of products made with kangaroo parts. Though Section 6530 has been the law of California for years, upon information and belief, neither the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, which is the agency tasked with the investigation and prosecution of wildlife trafficking, nor any state or county prosecutors, has initiated a single enforcement action for violations of the kangaroo portion of Section 653o. This is despite the fact that kangaroo leather, or "k-leather," soccer cleats are openly sold throughout California by various retail stores. These stores make no attempt to hide the fact that these products contain kangaroo parts; in fact, many store employees are forthright and honest about which shoe models are made of kangaroo leather and openly acknowledge that the sale of such products is illegal in the state. In addition, marketing or labeling on the shoeboxes or shoes themselves often reveals their kangaroo leather contents.

Over the past many months, plaintiffs have demanded enforcement action by writing to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Attorney General, and numerous city attorneys on multiple occasions offering explicit evidence showing the sale of kangaroo leather soccer shoes. One such company openly selling kangaroo leather shoes is defendant SOCCER WEARHOUSE, INC., which currently operates three retail stores in Southern California. All three of these stores offer multiple models of kangaroo leather shoes for sale. By offering for sale and selling illegal products – namely, kangaroo leather shoes - defendant is engaging in unfair competition in violation of California's Unfair Competition Law (hereafter UCL), at Business and Professions Code section 17200 et seq.

By this action, plaintiffs ANIMAL WELLNESS ACTION and the CENTER FOR A HUMANE ECONOMY ask the Court to enjoin defendant from offering for sale and selling illegal products in violation of the UCL. In support of their complaint, plaintiffs allege as follows:

27

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Originally, there were four locations. One of the four, located in Eastvale, CA, is now permanently closed; the Soccer Wearhouse Web site states that that location is "currently relocating."

#### VENUE AND JURISDICTION

- 1. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 17204 (action for relief under the UCL) and Code of Civil Procedure section 410.10.
- 2. Venue is proper in Riverside County pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 395.5 because defendant's principal place of business is located in Eastvale, Riverside County, California; the majority (two out of three) of its retail locations are located in Riverside County; and many of the violations upon which this action is based occurred in the county.

### **PARTIES**

- 3. Plaintiff CENTER FOR A HUMANE ECONOMY (hereafter CENTER) is a national 501(c)(3) animal welfare non-profit organization headquartered in Maryland. The CENTER is the first organization of its kind to focus specifically on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a more humane economic order. Its efforts include corporate engagement, innovation promotion, advocacy campaigns, consumer education, lobbying, research and analysis of business practices, and investigations, among other activities.
- 4. Plaintiff ANIMAL WELLNESS ACTION (hereafter AWA) is a national 501(c)(4) animal welfare non-profit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. AWA works to promote animal welfare by advocating for the passage and enforcement of laws that shield animals from cruelty. ANIMAL WELLNESS ACTION maintains around 135,000 supporters nationwide, with thousands of members and supporters in California.
- 5. The CENTER and AWA work in tandem on a number of campaigns. One of their keystone campaigns is "Kangaroos Are Not Shoes," which works to disrupt the commercial killing in Australia of more than two million wild kangaroos annually, a significant portion of which is for the manufacture of soccer cleats, and ban the sale of kangaroo-sourced products both in the United States and abroad.
- 6. Defendant SOCCER WEARHOUSE, INC. is registered with the California Secretary of State with its principal place of business located at 12762 Limonite Ave., Eastvale, California, in Riverside County. It has three active retail locations in Southern California. According to their Web

3

4

5

6

7

8

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

site, the company "carr[ies] over 250 styles of soccer cleats, trending jerseys[,] and other soccer gear."

(Soccer Wearhouse <a href="https://soccerwearhouse.com">https://soccerwearhouse.com</a> [as of June 10, 2022].)

**FACTS** 

A. The Commercial Kangaroo Industry

7. The commercial kangaroo industry in Australia causes the largest commercial slaughter of wild mammals in the world. Each year, around two million<sup>2</sup> wild kangaroos are gunned down in their native habitat to feed the lucrative kangaroo parts industry.<sup>3</sup> This commercial "harvest"

of kangaroos is regulated, but only nominally: the humane killing standards in Australia's National

Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes

(hereafter Australian Code)<sup>4</sup> are voluntary, and compliance monitoring appears to concern paperwork

compliance rather than actual monitoring in the field. Enforcement is also almost non-existent: most

kangaroo hunting happens in rural areas, where the practices being used by hunters go unchecked.

8. Tellingly, the New South Wales Legislative Council's committee on planning and environment released an official governmental report in October 2021 that contained a number of heavy criticisms of industry practices and so-called government oversight.<sup>5</sup>

9. Shooters generally target kangaroos at night, and the Australian Code permits shooting from up to 200 meters (656 feet, or over two football fields) away. Hunting occurs in kangaroos' natural habitat, where brush and vegetation can obscure the shooters' sight, especially at night. One study's findings suggested that as many as forty percent of hunted kangaroos are mis-shot, though it is impossible to determine the true percentage of non-compliant shots. Rather than a single shot into

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

<sup>2</sup> This number does not include the collateral deaths to hundreds of thousands of baby and young kangaroos, however.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Kangaroo management through culling is also practiced; the Australian government and kangaroo parts industry claims that commercial kangaroo hunting is beneficial for ecological and environmental reasons. But academics argue that the Australian government overstates the number of wild kangaroos: the official counts employ poor population estimation methodology, and, even more damning, the official numbers have demonstrated physiologically impossible rates of growth.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes, updated in November 2020, is available at https://www.agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20-126digital.pdf. It is published by AgriFutures Australia.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This governmental report, titled "Health and wellbeing of kangaroos and other macropods in New South Wales," was published in October 2021 and is available at

https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2707/Report%20No%2011%20-%20PC7%20-%20Health%20and%20wellbeing%20of%20kangaroos%20and%20other%20macropods%20in%20NSW.pdf.

the brain delivering quick death, kangaroos may be injured by a poorly aimed bullet and then either escape to die a slow death in the wild, or must suffer through repeated gunshots until they die.

- 10. Not only are the Australian Code's so-called humane standards useless without enforcement, but the standards also affirmatively permit shockingly brutal practices. For example, the Australian Code stipulates that if dependent young kangaroos ("joeys") are found in the pouch of a slain mother kangaroo, or are found at the foot of the mother and are able to be caught in hand, the joey is to be killed by blunt force trauma to the brain typically accomplished by the shooter smashing in the young kangaroo's head or swinging the baby against a hard surface like a vehicle. The Australian Code aims for this death to occur within three minutes, rather than instantaneously or even within several seconds. This means that many young joeys likely suffer minutes-long excruciating, violent, messy, and bloody deaths. And the most recent 2020 revision of the Australian Code eliminated the earlier guidance that told hunters to avoid shooting mother kangaroos with dependent young. Plaintiffs estimate that across Australia, hundreds of thousands of joeys every year are either bludgeoned to death in this manner, or, if they escape the shooter by fleeing, remain behind without their mother to slowly succumb to exposure, starvation, or predation.
- 11. The two commercial uses of dead wild kangaroos are the production of kangaroo leather and kangaroo meat.<sup>6</sup> The most prominent use of kangaroo leather is in the manufacture of high-end soccer cleats; for example, Nike, adidas,<sup>7</sup> Puma, and other international companies have expensive models of soccer cleats made of kangaroo leather. This is despite the innovation of new synthetic, recycled, and sustainable textiles that are more durable, lightweight, and higher performance than ever before.

# B. California Regulation of Kangaroo Leather

12. In the United States, California is a lucrative state for soccer cleat sales. The greater Los Angeles area is one of the Californian metropolitan areas containing the greatest number of soccer product retail stores.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Kangaroo meat is largely used for pet food instead of for human consumption, in large part due to public health and safety concerns.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> This complaint will use the adidas convention of not capitalizing the brand name.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> This report, "Skin in the Game," can be found online, at both KangaroosAreNotShoes.org and CenterforaHumaneEconomy.org/kangaroos-are-not-shoes-campaign.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> At that time in 2020, the fourth location was still open and operating.

- 20. Alongside these efforts, plaintiffs ran the larger international Kangaroos Are Not Shoes campaign. With the aim of stopping the use of kangaroo leather in shoes globally, the campaign produced a 60-second film in February 2021; erected billboards near Nike headquarters in Oregon in March 2021; organized protests not only in California but across the United States and in Australia; and funded the establishment of the International Kangaroo Protection Alliance (IKPA) in April 2021. In May 2021, AWA helped Congressmen Salud Carbajal (CA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (PA) in the introduction of the Kangaroo Protection Act into Congress (H.R. No. 917) and the New Jersey legislature (S3774) to ban the importation of kangaroo products into the United States; and AWA has lobbied (and continues to lobby) for the passage of the Kangaroo Protection Act currently pending in Congress.
- 21. From late 2020 through the spring of 2022, plaintiffs worked with an independent investigator to verify whether soccer retail stores in California were indeed abiding by the warning letter sent in 2020 by the Department. Plaintiffs' investigator visited dozens of independent retailers throughout California, including all open Soccer Wearhouse locations. Plaintiffs used store clerk admissions and descriptions, product tags, and official product descriptions on the manufacturers' Web site – and other Web sites, when particular models have been retired off the manufacturers' site—to determine whether a particular model is made of kangaroo leather. Additionally, in July 2020, plaintiffs had compiled an extensive, but not exhaustive, list<sup>10</sup> of particular soccer cleat models that are made of kangaroo leather with the assistance of a soccer boot expert known as "Boot Wizard" in his popular online content.
- 22. On March 7, 2021, plaintiffs' investigator visited defendant's retail location located at 400 W. Disney Way in Anaheim, California. According to plaintiffs' investigator, the clerk in the store at the time "was very amenable to showing [her] all the k-leather" shoes available for purchase, which included Puma King model cleats, Nike Tiempo Legend Elite model cleats, and a pair of Nike

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> This document is available at https://kangaroosarenotshoes.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/04/CleatSheetNOBUY\_4.1.21.pdf.

Premier II model cleats. Plaintiffs' investigator also verified through the tags on the shoes that the products were, in fact, made with kangaroo leather.

- 23. According to the Puma Web site, all "Puma King" models of soccer cleats contain kangaroo leather (except a specific one which is labeled "VG," marketed as vegan, and has starkly different coloring from all other models). According to the Nike Web site, the "Tiempo Legend Elites" and "Nike Premier II" models of soccer cleats contain kangaroo leather.
- 24. On May 6, 2021, plaintiffs' investigator visited the Soccer Wearhouse retail location located at 41377 Margarita Road in Temecula, California. There, a store clerk informed her that k-leather is not allowed to be sold, but the store has Puma King Platinum cleats made with k-leather available for purchase because if Puma sends them a k-leather pair, Soccer Wearhouse will sell it. Plaintiffs found available for purchase not only Puma King Platinum cleats in two colors but also Puma King Pro cleats in three colors. The clerk also said that sometimes Nike sends k-leather shoes to the store as well.
- 25. According to the Puma Web site, the "Puma King Platinum"<sup>11</sup> model of soccer cleats contains kangaroo leather. According to online retail sources including SoccerWearhouse.com, ProDirectSoccer.com, and Soccer.com (as the "King Pro" model is retired from the Puma Web site), the "Puma King Pro" model of soccer cleats contain kangaroo leather.
- 26. Also on May 6, 2021, plaintiffs' investigator visited the Soccer Wearhouse retail location located at 2795 Cabot Drive in Corona, California. This store was offering for sale multiple Puma King model cleats, a pair of adidas Copa 19.1 model cleats, and a pair of Puma Capitano model cleats. A clerk at that store informed plaintiffs' investigator that they receive k-leather shoes from Puma and Nike, but less so from adidas.
- 27. According to online retail sources such as SoccerPlusUSA.com (as "Capitano" model is retired from the Puma Web site), the "Puma Capitano" model of cleats contains kangaroo leather. According to online retail sources, including Amazon.com, ProDirectSoccer.com, and Soccer.com

<sup>27 ||</sup>\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Except the model which is marked "VG" and contains "vegan leather."

(as the "Copa 19.1" model is retired from the adidas Web site), the "Copa 19.1" model of cleats contain kangaroo leather.

- 28. By the end of 2021, it was clear to plaintiffs that despite their earlier outreach to the Department and city attorneys, and despite the Department's warning letter to in-state retailers, many retailers across the state were continuing to sell kangaroo leather soccer cleats. In September 2021, armed with this information, plaintiffs once again communicated with the Department to discuss concerns regarding the lack of enforcement of Section 6530 in the state. Plaintiffs informed the Department that the CENTER had detailed proof of many stores still committing ongoing violations of Section 653o.
- 29. On October 20, 2021, and November 8, 2021, plaintiffs' investigator once again reached out to the Department. In the November 8 correspondence, she informed the Department that she had telephoned four soccer retail stores that very day and found that the stores were still selling kangaroo leather cleats.
- 30. Finally, on December 30, 2021, the CENTER yet again e-mailed the Department to re-establish communications and discuss enforcement efforts. On January 26, 2022, the CENTER received a brief reply from the Department indicating that because the matter was currently under investigation, they were not able to discuss or share information. Plaintiffs were tentatively hopeful that the Department's attention to the matter would heighten Section 6530 compliance.
- 31. In the spring of 2022, plaintiffs' investigator returned to the same three Soccer Wearhouse retail locations to check whether kangaroo leather cleats were still being sold there.
- 32. On May 14, 2022, plaintiffs' investigator visited the Soccer Wearhouse retail location located at 41377 Margarita Road in Temecula, California. She observed several colors of Puma King Platinum FG model cleats available for purchase, which a store clerk confirmed are k-leather. The clerk then acknowledged that k-leather was illegal in California, and that the store received those cleats in a few weeks ago. When plaintiffs' investigator asked how the store got the shoes if it was illegal, the clerk shrugged and responded that "they send them to us."

33.

contain kangaroo leather.

34. On May 14, 2022, plaintiffs' investigator visited the Soccer Wearhouse retail location

According to the Puma Web site, the "Puma King Platinum FG" model of cleats

located at 2795 Cabot Drive, in Corona, California. On display for sale were three colors of Puma King Platinum model cleats and two colors of adidas Copa Sense model cleats. A sales clerk acknowledged that the cleats are illegal to sell and also explained that the store gets them from out of state. The clerk then advised plaintiffs' investigator "strongly" to go to Las Vegas to get k-leather cleats, and, backtracking, explained that the shoes must have slipped in from the companies by mistake. The clerk explained that the law against k-leather had been in effect for "about eight years" and further explained that the store might not get any more k-leather shoes because the state is cracking down with another law.

35. On May 14, 2022, plaintiffs' investigator visited the Soccer Wearhouse retail location located at 400 W. Disney Way, in Anaheim, California. On display for sale were adidas Copa Mundial model cleats, two colors of adidas Copa Sense 1 model cleats, three colors of Puma King Platinum model cleats, and two colors of Puma King Pro TT model shoes. The clerks at this location revealed that they were aware that the sale of k-leather was illegal, and explained that while the store sometimes gets k-leather shoes shipped to them, the clerks did not know when the store would be receiving more.

36. Finally, on June 14, 2022, an agent for plaintiffs visited the Soccer Wearhouse retail location at 400 W. Disney Way, in Anaheim, California. They purchased a black/black pair of Puma King Platinum 21 FG/AG model cleats for a total of \$215.50 (two-hundred and fifteen dollars and fifty cents). A store clerk admitted that kangaroo leather cleats were illegal to sell in California. The store had multiple colors of this model available for purchase, including black/black, black/red, and black/white. According to the Puma Web site, the "Puma King Platinum 21 FG/AG" model of cleats contain kangaroo leather.

# C. Plaintiffs' Injury

37. As detailed above, plaintiffs have incurred significant economic injury and expenditure of resources in its efforts to investigate and encourage compliance with Penal Code

section 653o. Plaintiffs began their joint "Kangaroos Are Not Shoes" campaign in 2020 with the mission to disrupt the kangaroo leather market globally and promote the use of kangaroo leather alternatives. The campaign has a multi-pronged approach: consumer education and awareness; pressuring large multi-national manufacturers to stop using kangaroo leather and opt instead for more humane alternatives; and lobbying for kangaroo protection laws, among other activities.

- 38. Since the early days of the campaign, plaintiffs suspected that both in-state and outof-state retailers were broadly violating California's prohibition against the sale of kangaroo products
  within the state. Plaintiffs hired an independent contractor to investigate, gather data, and produce an
  extensive report, which was completed and published in June 2020. Plaintiffs next contacted
  numerous city attorneys, law enforcement officials, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to inform
  them of their findings and encourage proper enforcement of the law. Plaintiffs also reached out to
  many retailers and manufacturers to inform them of California's ban on kangaroo leather products.
  All told, plaintiffs sent hundreds of letters via mail, incurring printing and mailing costs.
- 39. But these attempts were, for the most part, fruitless. While a select number of retailers voluntarily halted in-state sales, plaintiffs again found through their own investigation that violators persisted and actual enforcement of the law against them appeared to remain nonexistent. So plaintiffs yet again contacted the Department multiple times to inform them of plaintiffs' findings, and were in correspondence with the Department as recently as late 2021 to early 2022.
- 40. Plaintiffs have thus spent about two years' worth of time, energy, manpower, and monetary resources to ensure sellers' compliance with California penal law. This time and money spent on investigative and enforcement efforts directed towards soccer retail stores of which defendant is a notable example to achieve compliance with Section 6530 could have been spent in various other ways. Had plaintiffs not had to divert these resources as a result of defendant's unlawful activities, plaintiffs would have directed the resources towards other mission-critical activities in plaintiffs' larger international campaign to expose the cruelties within the kangaroo leather market

farming, preventing unnecessary animal testing, and combating cockfighting, among others.

12

13 14

16

15

17 18

19

20 21

22

23 24

25

26

27

28

48.	Accordingly, plaintiffs are parties that have suffered injury in fact and have lost money
or property	as a result of defendant's unfair competition, and as such have standing to sue to enjoin
defendant fr	rom engaging in its unlawful acts under Business and Professions Code section 17204.

- By offering for sale and selling kangaroo leather shoes, defendant violates Penal Code 49. section 653o.
- 50. By defendant's unlawful acts in violation of Penal Code section 6530, defendant engages in unfair competition in violation of Business and Professions Code section 17200 et seq.
- 51. Defendant has engaged and is engaging in unfair competition by committing unlawful acts in violation of Penal Code section 653o. Defendant will continue to do so unless enjoined by this Court.
- 52. Plaintiffs are entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees pursuant to the California Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5, because by taking on the necessity and financial burden of private enforcement of Section 6530 by means of California's UCL, plaintiffs have conferred a significant benefit on the general public of the State of California – namely, the enjoinment of defendant's unlawful and unfair business practices.

# **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

Wherefore, plaintiffs pray for judgment and relief as follows:

- 53. For a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction enjoining Defendant SOCCER WEARHOUSE, INC., and its representatives, co-conspirators, and all persons acting in concert with defendant or on its behalf, from selling or offering for sale kangaroo leather shoes;
- 54. For a permanent injunction enjoining SOCCER WEARHOUSE, INC., together with its successors and assigns, agents, employees, officers, representatives, co-conspirators, and all persons acting in concert with defendant or on its behalf, from selling or offering for sale kangaroo leather shoes;
- 55. For a court order directing defendant SOCCER WEARHOUSE, INC. to provide plaintiffs and the Court with records and receipts of defendant's purchase of kangaroo leather shoes from suppliers, manufacturers, and/or dealers, from 2016 through present;

1	56.	For costs of suit and reasonable attorneys' fees to the full extent permitted by law;	
2	57.	For pre- and post-judgment interest;	
3	58.	For such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.	
4			
5	DATED: Jun	e 16, 2022	
6		Chowa L. Home	
7		Jessica L. Blome GREENFIRE LAW, PC	
8		Kathryn Schultz	
9		THE CENTER FOR A HUMANE ECONOMY  Pro hac vice application pending	
10			
11		Attorneys for Plaintiffs Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy	
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			
28		- 14 -	
		7 17 7	