

## COVER ESSAY

# Animals and butts: Minnesota's media campaign against tobacco

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Minnesota was the first state in the US to put in place a comprehensive, legislatively funded initiative to curb tobacco use. When the programme began in 1985, funding came from a fraction of one cent of state cigarette tax revenues – \$1.6 million per year. These funds covered programmes in schools, communities, and worksites as well as an ongoing anti-tobacco advertising campaign with paid ads on radio, television, bus shelters, and billboards across the state. Since 1990, the budget for Minnesota's non-smoking programme has been whittled away, and in 1993 the legislature all but eliminated the programme by cutting funds for the advertising campaigns.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has based its efforts to reduce smoking deaths on a strategy of prevention. In order to get our prevention messages to the right audience, MDH makes use of the persuasive power of the mass media to discourage young people from using tobacco. Not only have our anti-tobacco advertisements been successful in reaching our target audiences – adolescent boys and girls, and young adult women – they have also achieved international recognition, and won numerous local and national awards.

Our tobacco control media campaigns are directed towards young people who have not yet become addicted to cigarettes, but who are at risk of doing so because of their age, perceived social pressures, and other influences in the social environment. To reach these target groups and properly assess the effectiveness of the campaign, MDH based its ads on a strong body of research. The overall goal has been to change the social climate that encourages the use of tobacco.

In the spring of 1989, we began working hand-in-hand with our advertising agency, Martin/Williams Advertising, Inc, to develop a new ad campaign. One of the TV spots created to reach teenagers as part of this campaign was titled "Animals". This spot used a series of shots of animals who appeared to be smoking and displayed the message, "It looks just as stupid when you do it." It was produced by Martin/Williams and directed by Rick Dublin of Dublin Productions, both of Minneapolis.

During our 1989-90 media campaign, the success of the "Animals" spot led to the creation of two companion posters which were used to enhance and extend the message. A portion of one of these posters is reproduced on the cover of this issue of *Tobacco Control*.

That poster uses frames from the "Animals" television footage, depicting 12 domestic and exotic animals smoking. The other poster displays a series of discreetly executed photos of animals' posteriors and a picture of a cigarette butt, with the message "Butts are gross" (see figure).

The posters were first distributed at the Minnesota State Fair, an annual event which attracts over a million people from all over the state, in August 1989. The posters were a huge success. In fact, during the first two days of the fair we distributed 20000 posters, one per customer. Health professionals from MDH, who staffed the booth primarily so they could answer health-related questions, offered good-natured complaints about spending their entire four-hour shift rolling posters. Following the success of the "Butts" poster, Martin/Williams produced another 30-second TV spot in 1992, featuring tasteful shots of animals' posteriors and a human hand putting out a cigarette. The message was "There's only one butt in this commercial that's repulsive, and you're looking at it".

The ads and posters in the MDH media campaigns are based on careful research. They are designed to convince young people 12 to 13 years of age that they should forego the use of tobacco. The ads emphasize the negative aspects of smoking that are most likely to be important to our young target audience. These short-term social and personal consequences of using tobacco include bad smells, social disapproval, and the risk of looking foolish. However, even though these ads and posters were designed to appeal to a very specific age group, they seem to appeal to people of all ages.

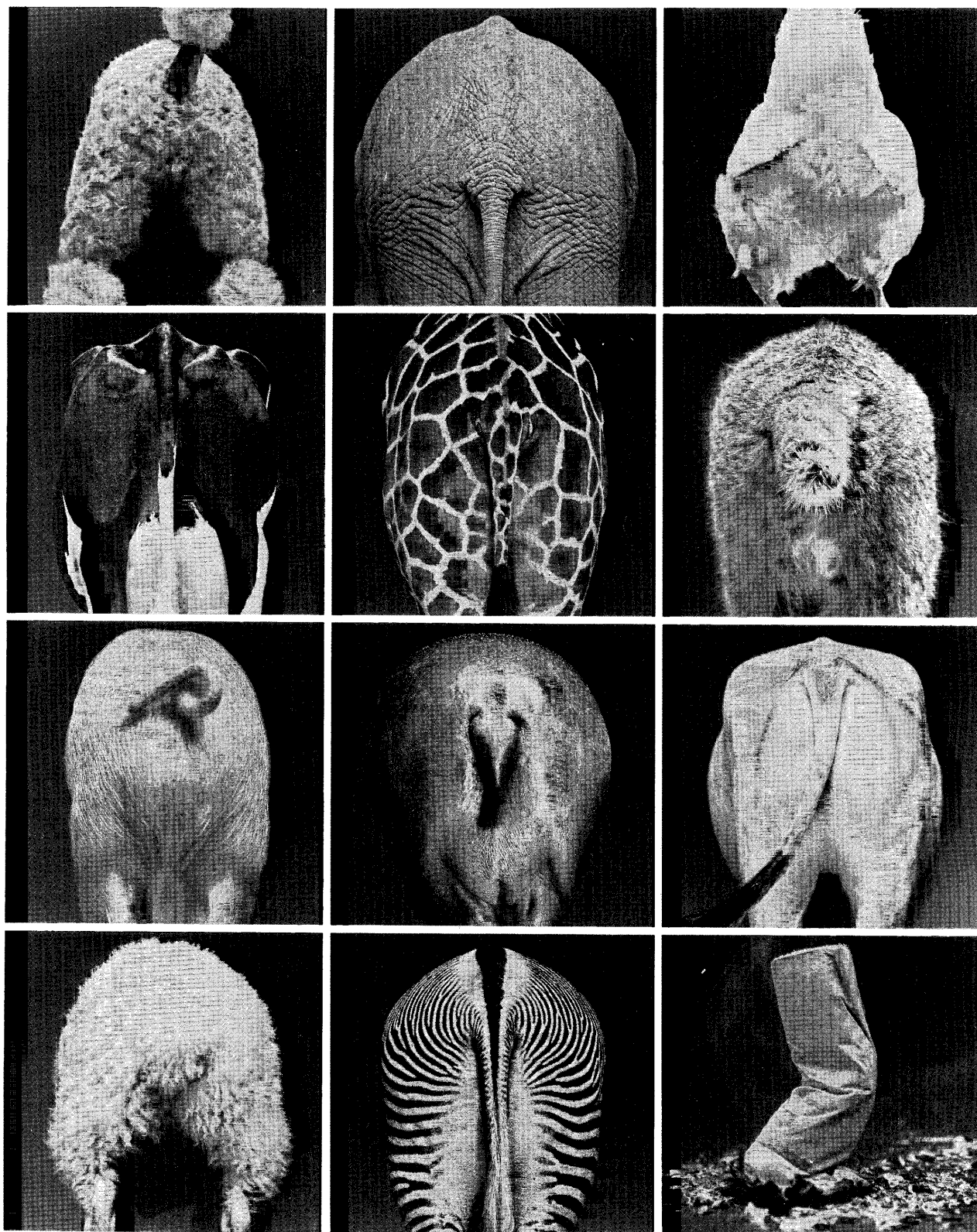
At several stages in the development of our anti-tobacco advertising, our market research included the use of focus groups – discussion groups of three to five participants who explain their thoughts and feelings about the ads. First, we used focus groups before the ads were created to help develop message concepts. Then we pre-tested rough versions of proposed ads, before the campaign began, and later we did a mid-campaign check, to get an idea of how the ads were being received. For example, this was the focus group schedule for development of the 1990 media campaign that included the "Animals" spot:

- During the concept development phase, in April and May of 1989, we held seven focus groups. The focus groups included adoles-

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# Butts Are Gross.

Minnesota Department of Health

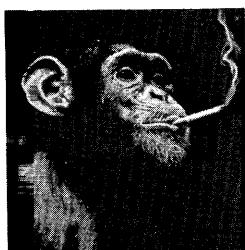




cents 12–13 years of age from the Minneapolis/St Paul area and other regions of the state who were at risk of becoming smokers.

- To pre-test rough versions of the ads, we held five focus groups in July 1989 using adolescents 12–13 years of age, African American and White.
- To help us critique the finished ads, we held 19 focus groups between March and July 1990. For those groups, we invited adolescents aged 12–13, who were at risk of becoming smokers. The focus group participants were White, African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian.

We wanted to know whether the ads were having an impact on young people in Minnesota's mixed race communities, so we conducted three separate focus groups of boys and girls aged 12–13, including African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, and Asians. In addition, we also conducted focus groups of white boys and girls and racially mixed groups that included Whites and African Americans. The "Animals" ad was unlike any other ad we had ever tested in that it worked well with all racial groups and both sexes. In all of the groups, the initial group reaction to the ad was laughter. When focus group participants were asked to choose the "best" ad, "Animals" consistently received the most favourable response. There was unanimous agreement regarding the participants' understanding of the nature of the message (ie, that smoking is unnatural), and participants were also unanimous in their appreciation of the humour in the ad. All of the participants said the ad was excellent.



In developing the concept for the ad, the creative team at Martin/Williams took into account research findings from the literature we had provided to them, and market research about the target audience from the focus groups. A significant finding from the research for all of our youth-targeted campaigns was the importance of humour. Humour is the best vehicle to use in reaching this group. Humour breaks down barriers and defences that children have set up within themselves, as well as between themselves and others. Effectively done, humour also seems to cross gender and racial lines. During the development process for "Animals", the overriding question for the creative team from Martin/Williams was how they could best make use of humour to make smoking look stupid. The "Animals" TV spot – and later the posters and the "Butts" TV spot – were the successful results of this effort.

Dublin Productions filmed the "Animals" spot. During the filming, the segment for each animal had to be shot separately, with some segments taking longer than others. Two prop managers worked during the two-day "shoot," making prop "cigarettes" that would work with each animal. The cigarettes had to be the right size, and they had to burn in a convincing manner. In some cases, the animals were enticed to hold the cigarettes in their mouths (eg, by sticking a grape or French fry on the



end). Sometimes the cigarettes were attached with surgical glue, or were hooked on a tooth with specially designed rubber bands.

The animals were treated with complete respect. Throughout the two days of filming, a veterinarian was always in attendance, and the animals were handled by their own trainers to ensure their comfort and cooperation. One of the animal "performers", a camel, was edited out of the TV spot but used later on the poster.

In making its media buys for the 1989–91 campaign, Martin/Williams selected television stations that provide strong coverage in all 87 counties in the state. Targeted programming was chosen on broadcast TV, and cable TV was used as an inexpensive and efficient way to reach our target audiences. In surveys of Minnesota school children, kids at risk of becoming smokers had been found to watch significantly more TV than kids who were not at risk – hence the emphasis on television. At our request, Martin/Williams negotiated one-for-one bonus spots: that is, one free ad for every purchased ad.

"Animals" originally ran in rotation with two other TV spots also aimed at kids. "Smoking Grate" focused on kids' tendency to overestimate the number of their peers who smoke, and "Rock Video" depicted the social rejection that goes with some of the consequences of smoking, such as bad breath, yellow teeth, and bad smell. The campaign also featured six radio spots, utilising several different styles of music.

Using standard advertising industry measurements of reach and frequency, the media strategies used in the 1989–90 campaign were quite successful in getting the message to the target groups. "Reach" refers to the percentage of the target group who have seen one or more of the ads, and "frequency" refers to the average number of times an individual target group member has seen an ad. Estimates are based on US Arbitron ratings. During the 1989–90 campaign, for boys and girls at risk of becoming smokers, the estimated reach for the MDH ads was 95%; and the estimated frequency was 50.6 for the nine-month campaign. The ads used in the 1989–90 campaign included "Animals."

The campaign was also evaluated with pre-campaign and post-campaign awareness surveys, conducted in September/October 1989 and March 1990, using adolescents from the neighbouring state of Wisconsin as a comparison group. Awareness of specific ads was measured in two ways: by asking survey participants to describe any anti-tobacco television ads they had heard recently (spontaneous recall), and by asking if they remember hearing or seeing specific ads described by the survey interviewer (aided recognition).

Among adolescents, aided recognition of specific television ads was high – more than 90% recognised one or more television ads. Recognition of television ads did not differ by gender or place of residence, and those findings are consistent with previous surveys. "Animals" was the most frequently recognised ad among Minnesota adolescents.



We also evaluated the impact of our media campaign by measuring the extent to which the target audience shared the attitudes about smoking portrayed in the ads, before and after the ads were aired. Again, the television ads were based on the "smoking is unnatural" theme used in "Animals", and questions used in the evaluation were also based on that theme. The evaluation measured the extent to which adolescents agreed with the statement "Smoking is unnatural" before and after the ad campaign. Compared with the Wisconsin control group, Minnesota adolescents showed a significantly greater increase in agreement with that statement.

One of the surprising discoveries about the Health Department's "Animals" ad campaign has been the "spill-over effect". Although our advertising has been directed mainly at young people, the recognition factor (a key measure of advertising effectiveness) has been very high among adults. In our April 1991 statewide survey, more than 80% of Minnesota adults reported seeing or hearing ads that tried to convince people not to use tobacco. More than 60% specifically recalled seeing the "Animals" ad. This finding attests to the universal appeal of the ad's theme, and the creativity and impact of its presentation. This "spill-over effect" is even more remarkable when one considers that it was strategically placed to reach an audience of children, not adults. One reason the ad achieved such high levels of recognition may have been its enthusiastic acceptance by the state's television stations. Many stations played the ad in prime time, on an unpaid public-service basis.

The "Animals" TV spot won the Silver Lion Award at the prestigious Cannes International Advertising Festival in 1990 and the Silver Award at the 1990 New York Art Directors Show. The ad was also a finalist for the 1990 Clio Award. The "Animals" poster received a Distinctive Merit Award at the 1991 New York Art Directors Show and a Merit Award for 1991 at The One Show, a national competition (for art and copy) sponsored by The One Club based in New York. The poster was also a finalist at The Show in 1991, sponsored by the Minnesota Art Directors and Copywriters Club and the Minnesota Advertising Federation.

Because of the popularity of our anti-smoking materials, and constant inquiries regarding their use by others, we have set up a system by which we can license other states or organisations to use them. The only cost to the licensee is for audio/visual duplication and mailing. We do ask that MDH receive credit for any materials used by others. We have licensed several programmes throughout the world to use these materials. Programmes in the US that have used "Animals", either the TV spot or the poster, include the Jamestown, North Dakota, Tobacco Free Coalition; Salt Lake City, Utah, County Health Department; a paid statewide television campaign in Raleigh, North Carolina; the American Cancer Society, California and Texas Divisions; Pennsylvania Department of Health; and the Ros-

well Park Cancer Institute, New York. Examples of international programmes that have used "Animals" include the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health, the Cancer Society of Israel, and a programme in Quebec, Canada. "Animals" was also featured in regular television programming in France, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, Japan, Canada, and Australia.

The "Animals" media materials have also been used in a number of unusual ways. For example, in October 1992, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) used "Smoking Animals" for its "World's Funniest Commercials" programme. In January 1993, West Publishing Company's college textbook division featured four MDH 30-second TV spots including "Animals" on a videodisc supplement to their textbook, *Marketing*, 4th edn, by William G Zikmund and Michael d'Amico. In May 1993, the Pennsylvania Medical Society used "Smoking Animals" as a cover visual on their monthly journal, *Pennsylvania Medicine*. In September 1993, the "Smoking Animals" poster will be featured in a special "Stop Smoking" issue of *Vibrant Life*, a nationally distributed nonprofit health magazine with approximately 50000 readers, mainly hospital employees.

The MDH has also been contacted by Hoyle Products, a division of Brown & Bigelow, Inc, about making our "Butts are Gross" poster into a jigsaw puzzle. MDH and Hoyle are conducting contract negotiations for this "Butts" puzzle.

When MDH began its tobacco control advertising programme, it had limited experience in the use of mass media campaigns. Today Minnesota is recognised as a leader in the use of media for health promotion. While we have produced other material as well, the success and universal appeal of the "Animals" television ads and posters have provided a major contribution to this success.

#### Note to readers

We hereby solicit your ideas and contributions for future covers of *Tobacco Control*. Like previous covers, we would like future covers to be colourful and creative – with a tobacco control theme. Original artwork, anti-tobacco posters, photographs, and cartoons may all be considered. Material with an international flavour would be particularly desirable. A cover essay will generally appear in each issue to provide appropriate background information and commentary on the cover.

Please send ideas and submissions (originals or high-quality, camera-ready photographs) to the editor at the address on the inside front cover. – ED

