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Electronically FILED by Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles on 02/06/2019 05:18 PM Sherri R. Carter, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court, by H. Flores, Deputy Clerk

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8 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

9 COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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11 PAWS FOR EFFECT, INC.,

12 Plaintiff,

13 vs.

14 PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT  
 OF ANIMALS, INC., a corporation;  
 15 LAUREN THOMASSON, an individual;  
 LISA LANGE, an individual; and DOES 1-10,  
 16 inclusive,

17 Defendants.

Case No.

**COMPLAINT FOR DEFAMATION**

Trial Date: None Set

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1 Plaintiff Paws for Effect, Inc., a California corporation (“Plaintiff”), by and through its  
2 undersigned counsel, for its Complaint against Defendants People for the Ethical Treatment of  
3 Animals, Inc. (hereinafter, “PETA”), Lauren Thomasson, and Lisa Lange (together,  
4 “Defendants”), states the following:

5 **THE PARTIES**

6 1. Upon information and belief, Defendant Lauren Thomasson is an individual who  
7 resides and does business in Los Angeles County, California.

8 2. Upon information and belief, Defendant Lisa Lange is an individual who resides  
9 and does business in Los Angeles County, California.

10 3. Defendant PETA is a corporation headquartered in Norfolk City County, Virginia,  
11 and does business in Los Angeles County, California.

12 4. Plaintiff is a duly organized California corporation with its principal place of  
13 business in Los Angeles County, California.

14 5. The true names and capacities of Defendants named herein as Does 1 through 10,  
15 inclusive, whether individual, corporate, associate or otherwise are unknown to Plaintiff, who  
16 therefore sues said Defendants by fictitious names pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure  
17 section 474. Plaintiff will amend this Complaint to show such true names and capacities of Does 1  
18 through 10, inclusive, when they have been determined.

19 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

20 6. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Code of Civil  
21 Procedure § 410.10 because the statements at issue were written, sent, and received in the county  
22 of Los Angeles.

23 7. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to California Code of Civil  
24 Procedure § 395(a) because Defendants Lange and Thomasson reside, and all Defendants transact  
25 business in, the county of Los Angeles.

26 **GENERAL ALLEGATIONS**

27 8. Plaintiff raises, trains, and handles animals appearing in film and television.  
28 Relevant here, Plaintiff adopted and trained the dog Shelby, the star of the hit movie, *A Dog’s Way*

1 *Home.*

2 9. Plaintiff has never received a citation under the Animal Welfare Act (“AWA”).

3 10. However, consistent with PETA’s past practice of defaming individuals and  
4 organizations with whom it disagrees, on November 2, 2018, Defendant PETA, by and through  
5 Defendant Thomasson, wrote an email to Lauren Abrahams (an executive at Sony Pictures  
6 Entertainment (“Sony”), the studio that distributed *A Dog’s Way Home*), in which Defendants  
7 represented that Plaintiff has “racked up AWA citations” (the “Statement”).

8 11. The Statement is and was false, verifiably so.

9 12. Defendants repeated the Statement in numerous emails: from Defendants PETA  
10 and Thomasson to Charles Martin Smith (the director of *A Dog’s Way Home*) through Smith’s  
11 agent, David Saunders, on November 2, 2018; from Defendants PETA and Thomasson to Gavin  
12 Polone (the producer of *A Dog’s Way Home*) on November 14, 2018; and from Defendants PETA  
13 and Lange to Kitty Block (the Chief Executive Officer of the Humane Society of the United  
14 States) on or around January 3, 2019.

15 13. The Statement was repeated to an unknowable number of entertainment industry  
16 professionals. Sony and the Humane Society of the United States concluded that Plaintiff had  
17 never received a single citation under the AWA.

18 14. Despite being told the Statement was false, Defendants did nothing to correct or  
19 retract the Statement.

20 15. Defendants made the Statement with either actual knowledge of its falsity or with  
21 reckless disregard of the truth. Even a cursory investigation into Plaintiff would have revealed  
22 that Plaintiff has not received a single AWA citation.

23 16. Plaintiff was harmed by Defendants’ Statement. As Defendants intended in  
24 making the Statement, entertainment industry producers, directors, and studios naturally seek to  
25 distance themselves from anyone associated with a controversy instigated by PETA, including  
26 Plaintiff.

27 17. Defendants’ Statement is defamation that is not protected by either the First  
28 Amendment or California’s Anti-SLAPP law, as the Statement was a false statement not published

1 in a public forum and not concerning a public figure.

2 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

3 **(Defamation)**

4 18. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 17 of this  
5 Complaint as if fully set forth herein and for a cause of action alleges as follows:

6 19. Defendants published false and unprivileged communications tending directly to  
7 injure Plaintiff in its business and professional reputation. More specifically, Defendants made  
8 untrue statements that Plaintiff had received AWA citations, when in fact, Plaintiff had never  
9 received such a citation.

10 20. Defendants published the Statement to entertainment industry professionals.

11 21. Defendants' Statement was defamatory *per se*.

12 22. Defendants' Statements were designed and intended to diminish Plaintiff's  
13 reputation and injure Plaintiff in her good name and business dealings.

14 23. Both on its face, and because of the facts and circumstances known to persons who  
15 read or heard the Statement, it was reasonably understood that Defendants meant to convey that  
16 Plaintiff does not comply with applicable laws and regulations in the handling of animals, and that  
17 the entertainment industry should not associate with Plaintiff as a result.

18 24. Defendants made the Statement knowing it was false and/or with reckless disregard  
19 as to the Statement's truth or falsity.

20 25. As a result, Plaintiff has suffered damages in an amount to be proven at trial,  
21 including but not limited to, harm to Plaintiff's reputation, exposure to contempt, ridicule, and  
22 shame, and lost business opportunities.

23 26. In making the Statement, Defendants acted with malice, oppression, or fraud, and  
24 are thus liable for punitive damages in an amount to be proven at trial.

25 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

26 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants, and each of them, as  
27 follows:

28 1. For damages in an amount to be proven at trial;

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- 2. For punitive damages;
- 3. For pre-judgment and post-judgment interest;
- 4. For the costs of maintaining this suit; and
- 5. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

**DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY**

Plaintiff demands a trial by jury on all causes so triable.

DATED: February 4, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

BROWNE GEORGE ROSS LLP  
Eric M. George  
Richard A. Schwartz



By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Richard A. Schwartz  
Attorneys for Paws for Effect, Inc.