

Kangaroo-Skin Soccer Cleats Vanish from the World Cup Stage

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, July 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Lionel Messi of Argentina, Kylian Mbappé of France, Erling Haaland of Norway, Harry Kane of England and all other elite athletes on the pitch are donning football boots made from fabrics other than kangaroo skins, according to the [Center for a Humane Economy](#) and Animal Wellness Action. It appears that just one player—Junnosuke Suzuki of Japan—had any plans to wear skins made from kangaroos, signaling a remarkable cultural and marketplace shift in the core equipment for hundreds of millions of people in 190 countries who play the game.

Since launching the Kangaroos Are Not Shoes campaign in 2020, the organizations have secured commitments from every major athletic shoe manufacturer in the world to end the use of kangaroo skins. In 2025-26 alone, Adidas, ASICS, and Umbro joined Nike, Puma, New Balance, and Sokito in abandoning kangaroo parts, while Mizuno announced its intention to stop (though its pace of action is maddeningly slow). These companies, until very recently had dozens of models of kangaroo-skin shoes sold to hundreds of millions of players in more than 190 nations, driving the commercial killing of two million kangaroos across their native range in Australia.

“With their footwear choices, the world’s elite players are signaling to hundreds of millions of soccer enthusiasts that kangaroo-skin soccer shoes are as archaic as film cameras, fax machines, and phone books,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of the Center for a Humane Economy.

Of the 1,248 players on the official tournament rosters, just one player from Japan indicated he may use a shoe model made with kangaroo skin. Japan was eliminated in a prior round, meaning that the late rounds are free of kangaroo-based shoes. At the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, kangaroo-skin soccer cleats were already in steep decline, accounting for only a tiny fraction of goals scored during the tournament. At the 2026 FIFA World Cup, they have effectively vanished.

For the Center for a Humane Economy and Animal Wellness Action, the disappearance of kangaroo leather from soccer's grandest stage marks the culmination of a six-year international campaign to persuade athletic shoe manufacturers to stop sourcing the skins of wild kangaroos for soccer cleats. The shift represents one of the most consequential corporate animal-welfare victories in the history of professional sports.

A pivotal moment came in 2025 when Center for a Humane Economy president Wayne Pacelle

traveled to Nuremberg to address Adidas shareholders and leadership at the company's annual meeting. The response by Adidas CEO Bjorn Gulden caused spontaneous applause when he told Pacelle the company had stopped sourcing kangaroos for shoes and was exiting production. ASICS came next followed by Mizuno pledging to stop and then Umbro, completing a cascade of corporate commitments that transformed the industry.

"Just a few years ago, the world's biggest athletic brands were helping to drive demand for the commercial slaughter of wild kangaroos," added Pacelle. "Sourcing products from slain native wildlife for the biggest sport in the world was a prescription for mass killing of iconic kangaroos."

The campaign succeeded through a combination of corporate engagement, filmmaking, shareholder and consumer education, investigative work, and legislative action.

"The companies selling these shoes marketed innovation, performance, and style. We wanted people to see what that innovation was built on: a cruel and inhumane night slaughter of millions of kangaroos and their young," said Jennifer Skiff, campaign leader and director of international programs for the Center for a Humane Economy. "We were up against an industry that was telling lawmakers and global corporations that the kangaroo kill was ethical and humane. There's nothing humane about shooting a mother in the dark, bludgeoning the joey in her pouch, and leaving the one at her foot to starve or be taken by a predator."

The organizations said the absence of kangaroo-skin cleats from the 2026 World Cup should be viewed not as an isolated sports-industry trend, but as a milestone in a larger global movement toward a more humane economy—one that rewards technological innovation while reducing dependence on the exploitation of animals.

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) whose mission is to help animals by promoting laws and regulations at federal, state, and local levels that forbid cruelty to all animals. The

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