

# Meet Ingrid Newkirk

PETA founder and President **Ingrid Newkirk** has led the world's largest animal rights organization for more than 40 years. As PETA's president, she has traveled around the world to talk about animal rights issues. Her passion and dedication to making this world a better place for all living beings has inspired many others to do what they can to help animals.



## Early Life

Ingrid was born in Surrey, England, and lived in Europe until she was 7 years old, when she and her parents moved to New Delhi, India. Her father worked as an engineer, and her mother volunteered with charities and for Mother Teresa, a nun who helped many people. Ingrid's early volunteer work—packing pills and rolling bandages for people who were suffering from a disease called “leprosy,” stuffing toys for orphans, and feeding stray animals—helped to shape her opinion that anyone in need, including animals, deserves our help.

Until she was 21, Ingrid didn't really think about animal rights or being a vegan. In 1970, however, when she was living in Maryland, her neighbor abandoned some kittens and Ingrid decided to take them to an animal shelter. This was a life-changing experience for her and led to her first job working to help animals—she cleaned their kennels and investigated people who were cruel to them. Peter Singer's book *Animal Liberation* and her experiences in that job and later on—including finding a fox and a squirrel caught in steel-jaw traps, seeing a pig who was left to starve on a farm, and inspecting laboratories and circus acts for the government—made her realize that there needed to be an organization like PETA.

## Her Career

Ingrid has also served as a deputy sheriff, a Maryland state law-enforcement officer who had the most victories in making sure that animal abusers were punished, the director of cruelty investigations for the second-oldest humane society in the U.S., and the chief of animal disease control for the Commission on Public Health in Washington, D.C.

Under Ingrid's leadership, a law was passed to create the first-ever spay/neuter clinic in Washington, D.C. She also participated in the investigation that led to the first arrest in U.S. history of a

laboratory animal experimenter on cruelty charges and helped to make sure that Taiwan passed a law against abusing animals. She led the effort to close a secret Department of Defense “wound laboratory” where animals were being shot, and she's started many other campaigns against animal abuse.

## Other Accomplishments

Since it was founded, PETA has let people know about terrible animal abuse in laboratories, leading to many positive changes, including making sure that some of these places closed down, that they no longer receive money from the government, that animals were taken away from them, and that the U.S. Department of Agriculture filed charges against some of them. PETA has also closed the largest horse-slaughter business in North America, persuaded dozens of major clothing designers and hundreds of companies to stop using fur, ended all car-crash tests on animals, cleaned up awful dog pounds, helped end dissection requirements in schools, and provided millions of people with information on becoming vegan, companion-animal care, and many other issues.



Ingrid is the author of many books, including *50 Awesome Ways Kids Can Help Animals*. She has also been the subject of an HBO documentary, *I Am an Animal: The Story of Ingrid Newkirk and PETA*. In addition, she has spoken at many animal rights conferences and written many articles on the treatment of animals in slaughterhouses, circuses, laboratories, and people's homes.

As her biography shows, Ingrid is an abolitionist—that is, someone who works to stop evil behavior like cruelty to animals. She believes strongly that animals are not ours to experiment on, eat, wear, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way.

