

Why I Believe that Wearing Fur is Cruel (And How We Can Make More Humane Choices)

Kara Holmquist

Did you know that 50 million animals are killed by the fur industry for their fur each year? These animals include mink, raccoon, rabbits, foxes, and others. Many are trapped using inhumane, body-gripping traps that capture the foot or leg of an animal or snare it around the neck. Animals that

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are caught in these traps can die from predators, exposure or self-mutilation (chewing their limbs off) before they are clubbed or shot by the trapper.

However, most animals that are used for fur are raised in fur “farms” or “ranches.” These animals have a horrible existence living in small wire cages for their whole lives. They have



Baby minks being raised on a fur farm in China. It takes 40-60 minks to make a full length mink coat like the one on the right. Photo from: <furisevil.org>.



On rabbit farms, rabbits are raised for their fur, which is used in boots and other garments. Photo from <rabbitfur.org>.



no ability to express the normal behaviors of their species and this causes terrible stress. If you ever see a video of animals on a fur farm, you will most likely see animals pacing and exhibiting abnormal and repetitive behaviors caused by the stress of being in this type of confinement.

When it is time to kill the animals (usually during the first winter of the animals’ lives, when their “pelts,” or coats, are thick), they are either gassed, electrocuted anally, injected with poison, or their necks are broken. Unfortunately, these practices are legal in most of the United States. Fur imported from other countries can come from animals kept in even more inhumane conditions and killed in ways that cause even more suffering.

When we think of fur, we probably think of a big fur coat. However, most of the fur sold today is in the form of trim and linings on coats and other clothes. Many people are wearing fur and might not even know it. Recent investigations by animal protection organizations have also shown that fur trim and figurines found in U.S. stores has come



Bobcat with its paw caught in a metal trap. Trappers sell fur to be made into coats like those on the right. Photo from <www.catcahelpanimals.org>.

from dogs and cats! While it is against the law to sell dog or cat fur in the U.S., this type of fur has been imported into the U.S. from other countries. The Humane Society of the United States estimates that half of the animals killed in the fur trade are used for fur trim. Only when consumers stop creating a demand for this product, will the supply dry up and the cruelty end.

Given the immense harm that these animals endure, why do people still want to buy fur? In these modern times, we certainly don't need it for warmth. There are many alternative fabrics that do not come from animals that provide equivalent or even better warmth and ease of care. And for those people that like the look of fur and try to defend it as a reasonable fashion choice, there are many "faux" fur options (just be sure it is fake; see box). More and more designers are moving away from fur. For all these reasons, I believe there really is no legitimate excuse to wear fur.

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What you can do to prevent the use of animals for fur:

- **Don't wear fur.** This includes articles with fur trim.
- **Spread the word** about how fur is obtained. Many organizations produce cards, educational brochures, and other materials to help educate.
- **Make sure it's fake.** Visit <www.humane-society.org/furfree> to learn how to check to make sure faux (fake) fur on garments is not real fur.
- **Join animal protection groups** in your area and nationally, such as the MSPCA <www.mspca.org>, that work to pass legislation to restrict or ban the use of cruel traps, as well as other practices related to fur farming and labeling.
- **Donate any fur coats** that you, your family, or your friends have to a wildlife rehabilitator. They can use them for bedding for injured and abandoned wildlife.
- **Write a letter.** Ask designers and stores to stop using and selling fur. Visit the Humane Society's website (above) for a list of designers that have pledged not to use fur. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper to help inform others.

What do you think?

Would you support a law that bans fur?

