

TEN THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FUR

1. How many animals are killed for fur every year?

More than one billion

It is estimated that over one billion animals are killed for their fur every year in order to supply the demand for fur worldwide. Many different species of wild and domestic animals are used in the fur industry, including mink, foxes, raccoon dogs, chinchillas, dogs, cats, seals, bobcats and beavers. Though it is rabbits that are killed in the greatest numbers each year simply because they are cheap and easy to breed and handle. There is a common misconception that rabbit fur is a by-product of the rabbit meat industry; however, to obtain good quality pelts, rabbits cannot be slaughtered until after their first winter moult, by which time the meat would be too tough for standard human consumption, so the two industries breed and kill rabbits separately.



2. How is most of the fur produced?

85% of fur comes from animals bred and killed on intensive fur farms



Historically, trapping wild animals used to supply most of the animals used in the fur industry. Today, millions of wild animals, including bobcats, coyotes, foxes, lynx, raccoons and wolves, are still trapped using inhumane contraptions such as steel-jaw leghold traps, body-gripping traps and wire neck snares – all of which inflict great pain and suffering. In addition, because fur traps and snares are indiscriminate, an unquantifiable number of dogs, cats, deer, birds and other non-target animals, including threatened and endangered animals, are unintentionally injured and killed in these cruel devices every year.

However, in order to meet escalating demand, today's \$15 billion fur industry now relies on the mass factory farming of wild and domestic animals to produce the majority of the world's fur pelts. It is estimated that 85% of fur now comes from animals intensively bred and reared around the world. The appalling conditions these animals have to endure on the farms means that each year tens of millions of animals suffer unnecessarily in this environment simply for their fur.

China has the biggest fur production and processing industries, accounting for 80% of the global fur trade, and is the largest exporter of fur. For example, European markets import a significant amount of fur originating from here, yet the majority of Norwegian-produced fur is exported to China, where it is more sought after than the domestically-produced fur.

The world's largest producer of mink fur is Denmark, killing over 12 million of these animals every year, and, after China, the Netherlands comes in third, slaughtering 5 million mink per annum. The USA is also a major supplier of mink fur, slaughtering an estimated 3 million farm-raised mink annually.

3. What is life like for animals on a fur farm?

The animals spend each day caged in terrible conditions, showing clear signs of physical and mental suffering

Fur farms are remarkably uniform wherever they are around the world with animals being raised in highly intensive conditions, often kept crammed into tiny barren cages, and left to stand on metal bars for their entire lives. Animals on fur farms are forced to endure the most profound indifference to their suffering, dignity and basic needs, such as the inadequate provision of food and water, or veterinary care – all in the name of ensuring high profits for the farmers.

Many species of animals commonly farmed for their fur are essentially wild animals which have been subject to little active selection for tameness or adaptability to the captive environment. Fox and mink have been bred in captivity for around 90 years, which is less than 3% of the domestication time of cattle, pigs, horses, and dogs, which have been raised in captivity by humans for more than 5,000 years. Hence, it is not possible to ensure conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering, especially given that animals farmed for fur spend their entire lives in barren, battery-style cages.

As a result of the highly stressful and inadequate conditions, stereotypic behaviours, such as head-weaving, pelt-biting, tail-sucking, jumping and twirling, self-mutilation and infanticide, as well as injuries and disease are common on fur farms.



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Slaughtering methods are designed to preserve the quality of the fur and there is little attention given to the welfare of the animals. Common slaughter methods include gassing, neck breaking, lethal injection, anal electrocution, and live skinning. Investigations of rabbit fur farms have shown that these animals often vocalise (also known as screaming) particularly prior to slaughter - rabbits only do this when experiencing extreme fear and distress, which demonstrates the horrific suffering experienced by millions of animals every year on these farms.

As increasing restrictions and guidelines are introduced in the traditional fur-producing countries in Europe, there is a worrying trend for

international fur traders, processors and fashion designers to gradually shift their business to China, where cheap labour and the absence of restrictive regulations reduces external pressure and greater profits can be achieved. Conditions on farms in China are usually worse than those established for some time in other countries, as often these farmers have no knowledge or experience of keeping animals, let alone non-domesticated species such as mink, fox and raccoon dogs.

However, the suffering caused by the inadequately regulated and inherently inhumane fur industry is widespread wherever the production is based in the world: in the USA, animals raised for fur are not covered by either the federal Animal Welfare or Humane Slaughter Acts; and the horrors of fur farming in Europe, where there is often legislation in place which should protect some of the animals' most basic needs, are regularly exposed. For example, the myth of 'ethical fur' was shattered in 2009 by the Norwegian organisation [Network for Animal Freedom >>](#) and in Sweden in 2010 by [the Animal Rights Alliance>>](#)

4. Isn't good quality fur representative of high welfare standards?

No- there is no such thing as high welfare fur

Animals killed for their fur are slaughtered just after their first moult. At this time their first winter coats have emerged and so their fur will look to be in prime condition. Therefore, the way the fur looks and feels does not reflect the terrible conditions in which the animals have been reared.

5. Does real fur have to be labelled?



Not always – it depends on the laws of the country where you buy the product

In the USA in December 2010, after years of campaigning and investigations by animal protection groups, the Truth in Fur Labeling Act was signed by President Obama, closing a loophole in the six-decade-old federal fur labelling law which previously allowed many animal fur garments to go unlabelled if the value of the product was \$150 or less. Labels of items containing fur that are for sale in America must now state the species of the animal and the origin of the fur garment.

A new European Union Regulation on the labelling of textile products was adopted in May 2011. This legislation stipulates that clothing manufacturers must clearly indicate the presence of animal-derived products, such as fur, leather or feathers, in textile items using the phrase "contains non-textile parts of animal origin", although manufacturers have been granted 2.5 years to adapt to the new rules.

Labelling schemes are a good step forward for consumer protection, providing the public with information so that they can

make ethical choices. However, in most parts of the world no such requirements exist, so fur is often either not labelled or deliberately mislabelled. Consumers are often misled by the low cost of fur products that are readily available around the world – mistakenly believing that the material couldn't be real fur due to its low price. For example, a pair of real fur-trimmed gloves can cost as little as a few dollars in high street shops or markets. Unlabelled fur is now also increasingly being used in the manufacture of toys for children and pets, ornaments, and even in interior design as bedspreads and cushion covers.

For tips on avoiding purchasing items containing real fur visit the [Fur Free Alliance Website >>](#)

6. Is fur trim cruel too?

Yes – the horrors behind items with fur trim are as cruel as in the making of an entire fur coat

In order to put any fur on an item – whether it is just trim or in the whole garment - an animal has to die. Animals whose pelts are used for fur trim are often subjected to even worse mistreatment than those whose full pelts are used because smaller pieces are needed, so even less care is taken to prevent the animal from suffering from a disfiguring injury or disease or brutal death. The market for fur trim is overtaking the demand for full fur garments, and is estimated to be worth billions of dollars per year.



7. What if the fur is 'Origin Assured'?

Claims of origin or links to assurance schemes are simply marketing tactics used by the fur industry in an attempt to hide the fact that all fur production causes immense suffering

The International Fur Trade Federation (IFTF) launched the 'Origin Assured' label in 2006, along with advertising campaigns claiming that fur is an environmentally sustainable product. This marketing has been cleverly crafted to dispel the moral stigma attached to wearing fur, and as an attempt to win back fashion designers and consumers, by promoting fur as a humane and environmentally sound product. These million dollar PR campaigns create a media spin of lies that show the sanitised and glossy world of fashion and are designed to hide the hideous truth which millions of animals caught up in this industry have to endure every day of their lives until they die.



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Inadequate import and labelling regulations mean that consumers can never be sure of the exact origin of the fur they are buying. The international fur sector is complex, with pelts passing through several countries and undergoing various processes before reaching the final consumer. As such, it is difficult for consumers to avoid fur products from certain countries, and a focus on high profits means that budget fur floods the global market and these pelts are mixed with others claiming to be of better quality. It is common for items to be mislabelled with regard to their species and origin in an attempt to circumvent international regulations, for example, dog and cat fur will often be disguised as a "vintage" or "faux fur". In addition, most retailers are unwilling to declare the true origin of their garments that come from countries such as China, in an effort to avoid the image of cheap production and inferior quality.

8. Isn't fur 'green'?

No - fur is not an environmentally friendly product

Over the past few years, the fur industry has been re-branding itself, advertising fur as a 'natural' and 'green' product, using the slogan "Fur is Green". The sheer scale of production in terms of numbers of animals reared and killed in and around the major fur processing centres poses a considerable environmental burden. Enormous amounts of blood and offal accumulate in slaughter facilities. The same applies to tanneries where dangerous chemicals, including chromium and formaldehyde (two highly polluting and potentially carcinogenic substances) represent a serious additional health and environmental hazard.

Several studies assessing the environmental impact of the fur industry have already been conducted in Europe and the USA to provide evidence against the fur industry's claim that fur is a 'green and natural' product; for example:

- In 2009, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) published the report 'TOXIC FUR: The Impacts of Fur Production on the Environment and the Risks to Human Health' to address the fur industry's inaccurate claims. The report looks at water and air pollution, energy consumption, and the use of toxic chemicals for fur processing. It demonstrates that the production of fur for fashion imposes significant adverse impacts on both the environment and human health.

- In 2010, Vier Pforten/Four Paws International commissioned a study into the use of formaldehyde, dyes and acids in fur processing – all known to be environmental poisons – and the impact these have on the health of those purchasing the products. The study showed that: 43% of fur items assessed were ‘highly contaminated, potentially damaging to health and not recommended’; 50% of the items were assessed as ‘substantially contaminated and not recommended’; and 7% were assessed as ‘moderately contaminated’. The “Poison Report” shows that the sample in the test with the highest contamination of chemicals damaging to health was a child’s jacket with a toxic fur trim.
- In 2010-11, three European groups (Bont voor Dieren, GAIA and Lega Antivivisezione) commissioned research to assess the environmental impact of the mink fur production chain. The analysis revealed that, compared with textiles, fur has a higher impact on 17 of the 18 environmental themes studied, including climate change, eutrophication and toxic emissions.

9. Have any countries banned fur?

Some countries have banned aspects of the fur trade, but nowhere has introduced a complete ban on both fur production and the sale of fur

As our understanding of animal sentience increases, so does the international momentum for legislation which prohibits or restricts the production and trade in fur. Fur farming is banned in the UK, Austria and Croatia, and other countries, including Italy, Sweden and Switzerland, have legislation that effectively outlaws fur farming by making it economically unviable.

Some legislation in countries prohibits the farming or trade in fur only with respect to certain species. For example: Denmark recently banned fox farming, but continues to be the world’s largest producer of mink fur; Russia banned seal hunts in 2009, yet continues to be a huge consumer of fur, accounting for 53% of China’s fur exports in 2007; the European Union (EU), USA and Australia have each banned the trade in fur from dogs and cats; and Mexico, USA, the EU, the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the Russian Federation have all banned the trade in fur from seals.



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These significant legislative achievements have come about as a result of the public’s mounting concern for animal welfare and the tireless campaigning of animal protection groups around the world, but no country has yet taken the logical step to impose a complete ban on fur production and trade, in acknowledgement that no animal should have to suffer in this inherently cruel industry for such trivial ends.

As regulation in European countries continues to render fur farms economically unviable or prohibited, China’s position as the global epicentre of fur production is cemented.

10. What is being done to stop this cruel industry?

While the cruelties and environmental threats of the fur industry have received little political attention, educated consumers and companies are increasingly making a stand and turning their backs on fur

Animal protection groups around the world are campaigning tirelessly to bring an end to the fur industry - conducting investigations to expose the inherent cruelty, harnessing the public's voice to call for an end to the fur trade, and lobbying governments to implement bans prohibiting the production and trade in fur. For example, on the heels of Russia's announcement banning the trade in fur from seals in 2011, Chinese animal advocates staged protests urging the Chinese government to reject Canadian seal trade proposals. China responded by postponing finalising a deal to import Canadian seal products following this organised and effective animal rights campaign, sending the clear message that "China is not a dumping ground for Canadian seal products".

Fashion designers, consumers and companies are increasingly turning their backs on fur. For example, in 2011, Oslo Fashion Week became the first fashion week to ban all fur from the runway, with support from internationally-renowned designers as well as Norwegian *Elle* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines; and in South Korea, after an overwhelming number of complaints from animal protection groups and concerned members of the public, Seoul city officials instructed Fendi to remove all fur pieces from their runway show, threatening to cancel it entirely if they did not comply.

Each year anti-fur campaign groups organise design competitions such as '[fffashion](#)' and '[Design Against Fur](#)', to encourage forward-thinking fashion designers to forgo fur in their products and to raise awareness of the cruelty of the fur trade. In 2010, Chinese Student Wang Shuai from Xiamen University of Technology, China won this prestigious award for his poster design showing the brutality of the fur trade and the financial profit made at the expense of animal suffering.

At the same time, many national and international retailers have ceased selling fur and are solidifying their fur-free commitment by signing onto the international [Fur Free Retailer programme](#).



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For information on fur free retailers please visit the following websites:

- [Fur Free Retailer Scheme](#)
- [HSUS's list of Fur-Free Retailers, Designers, and Brands](#)