

Content warning: references to animal killing

The Fur Market in Great Britain Consultation – The Vegan Society response

1. **Are you responding as an organisation or an individual?** Organisation
2. **Please give a summary of who your organisation represents and where relevant who you have consulted to formulate your response.**
The Vegan Society represents non-human animals, as well as people putting vegan beliefs into effect, and people supporting or supplying goods and services to vegans, amongst others.
3. **Where are you based in the UK?** England
4. **Would you like your response to be treated as confidential?** No
5. **What type of organisation are you responding for?** Charity
6. **What is the primary purpose of your organisation?** We are an educational charity that provides information and guidance of various aspects of veganism and plant-based living including land management, nutrition, food production, industry, law and policy.

7. **Is it wrong for animals to be killed for the sake of their fur?**

Strongly agree

8. **What are your views on whether any of following methods are acceptable ways to produce fur products?**

Options given:

- *Farming animals primarily for their fur;*
- *Farming animals primarily for their fur but only if subject to an assurance scheme; Trapping or hunting animals for their fur;*
- *Trapping or hunting animals for their fur but only if as part of a conservation scheme;*
- *Producing fur as a by-product of legal farming (where fur is not the primary value and purpose of animal production but is a component part e.g. meat);*
- *Producing fur as a by-product of legal hunting or population control (where fur is not the primary value).*

Strongly disagree with all.

9. **What is your attitude towards the import and/or sale and/or export of fur or fur products in GB?**

The Vegan Society strongly objects to the use of any animals within the fashion and textile industry. We are very confident that a large proportion of the public would agree that using an animals' fur for clothing, textile materials, or other apparel is both cruel and unnecessary. In July 2020, a [YouGov poll](#) revealed that 93% of the British public do not wear fur (83% have never worn it, 10% have previously but do not anymore, and only 3% still wear it). Also in this poll, the top four phrases that respondents most associated with fur were "unethical", "cruel", "outdated" and "out of touch". Plus, 72% of respondents supported a complete ban on imports.

In a Vegan Society survey, conducted in May 2021 (1,000 UK respondents, nationally representative, results not yet published), 61.4% of respondents stated they thought fur was cruel, and 33% said it was outdated. These figures rose sharply for respondents aged 55+, perhaps as they remembered the times when fur farms legally operated in the UK. In this age demographic, 68% said fur was cruel and 56% said it was outdated.

George Eustice states that we are a "nation of animal lovers", and we have taken some steps towards actualising this statement. The Animal Sentience Bill lays down in law what we all know to be true – animals perceive and feel the world around them, can suffer and feel pain. It is a fundamental ethical belief in our society that it is wrong to cause unnecessary harm or suffering to others. Yet, the global fur industry continues in many parts of the world. Though we in Great

Britain may represent a small proportion of the global fur market, we would be sending a very strong message to the rest of the world by ending imports, exports, and other trade relating to animal fur. We would be joining many other countries who are making progressive steps towards making the world kinder to animals.

The consultation states that "fur is defined as any animal skin, with hair, **fleece**, or fur fibres attached... for example, that of a mink, fox or rabbit. This definition of "fur" does not include skins or parts of skins which are intended to be converted into leather, or cowhide, **sheepskin** or shearling". The Vegan Society adamantly opposes the distinction made here between different animal species. The Cambridge Dictionary defines "fleece" as "the thick covering of wool on a sheep" - we know fleece may also refer to the hair of yaks, alpacas, rabbits, goats, and other animals. Removing and using the skins of any animal is cruel and unnecessary – regardless of their supposed "status" in our society.

The fur industry may say that fur is a "natural product" and use this terminology to promote a positive portrayal of the industry whilst hiding the truth. The term "natural" is unregulated, and there is nothing "natural" about wearing the skin and fur of another animal. This is particularly the case in a country like Britain where, even in the worst winters, we are much more subject to heavy rain than we are sub-zero temperatures. Fur is only "natural" when it is left on the animal it belongs to. In addition, there is no way to produce "ethical" fur. In our view, it is not *how* it is taken, but *that* it is taken.

If we in Great Britain want to be taken seriously on our stance towards the protection of animals, we must take a firm stand and stop the import or export of any animal fur – for any purpose. Furthermore, we should also be transitioning away from any trade in whole fleeces, wool, animal skins and leather on ethical, and climate change grounds.

10. Other than for clothing and apparel, what uses of fur should we be aware of?

Homeware, such as rugs, furniture covers, pillow covers and bedding. General accessories including keychains, car decorations and car covers. Pet toys e.g. cat toys.

11. Is your organisation directly involved in the fur sector?

No

Questions 14-22 are for those who answer "yes", so are not applicable.

23. How has the overall domestic market for real fur products changed over the last 5 years?

Greatly decreased.

Animal fur used in the fashion industry is now viewed by the public as outdated and cruel. As stated previously, only 3% of the British public wear fur, and following public pressure, a vast number of fashion retailers have removed animal fur from their collections. This includes budget-friendly high street stores (Primark, George at Asda, New Look, Next), online retailers (ASOS, Boohoo, Missguided), mid-range high street stores (H&M) and some of the largest and best-known designer fashion brands, globally (Versace, Prada, Chanel, Burberry, Net-a-Porter, Michael Kors, Gucci, Jimmy Choo and Giorgio Armani). However, despite this, fur products are still being imported into Great Britain through other means e.g., homeware (bedding, rugs, furniture etc.). Public discourse about fur used in this industry is less prevalent, but the cruelty remains, regardless of how the fur is used.

In addition, though the fashion brands listed – and many others – have anti-fur policies in place, there have been multiple reports of fur products being sold in their stores, primarily through investigations by Humane Society International. This is either through products labelled as "faux fur", when in fact the material is animal fur (e.g. Boots, Tesco, FatFace, Romwe, BooHoo); or when, despite anti-fur policies in place, fur products end up on the shelves – as is the case with the 2020 investigations into TK Maxx.

Hence, despite many brands and retailers trying to do better, with a lack of strong regulation, long supply chains and no penalties, the retail industry is susceptible to being complicit in the taking and trading of animals' fur. This is harmful both for consumers and for the reputations of companies and brands. But more importantly, the primary harm is for the animals.

24. Please provide any evidence of the scale and trends of the GB market in faux fur.

Most of the top ten clothing retailers in the UK (as stated by Retail Economics) have fur-free policies in place – and all sell faux fur. This list includes Primark, Marks and Spencer, Next, George, Tesco, and John Lewis.

In a Vegan Society survey, 27% of Brits said they expected to find animal products in faux fur. This is very worrying from a consumer trust perspective, and could show that the effect of HSI's investigations into faux fur are long lasting.

The Vegan Society currently works with several brands who sell faux fur, including George (Asda) and New Look. Both brands are making public commitments to protecting animals and their public image is soaring.

Questions 25-37 were answered as N/A.

38. We are interested in finding out more about other countries' existing or planned restrictions on fur. Please provide any information and/or evidence that you are aware of.

Two regions in Britain have already banned the sale of animal fur. Oldham Council (Manchester) was the first to do so, followed by Islington Council (London) in September 2019. Brighton and Hove council are also considering such a measure.

In June 2021, Israel became the first country in the world to ban the sale of fur for fashion. Exceptions include for "scientific research, education, for instruction and religious purposes and tradition".

The following information has been taken from PETA's website. The following countries have fur-farming bans: Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia.

The following have importation and sales bans: California, India, Los Angeles, New Zealand (banned milk fur but allows ferrets), San Francisco, Wellesley (Massachusetts), West Hollywood (California), Weston (Massachusetts) and Sao Paulo (Brazil).

The following have partial bans: Denmark, France, Hungary, Israel, Netherlands, Ireland, Spain.