

Is your coat fur fake, or is it Fido?



AP Photo: Two raccoon dog pups, and a third unseen pup, members of the canine family who...

By KASIE HUNT, Associated Press Writer

Fri Feb 23, 3:41 PM ET

WASHINGTON - That fur trim on your jacket that you think is fake? Tell it to Fido. An animal advocacy group says its investigation has turned up coats — some with designer labels, some at higher-end retailers — with fur from man's best friend. Some retailers were set scrambling to pull the coats from shelves, take them off Web sites and even offer refunds to consumers.

The Humane Society of the United States said it purchased coats from reputable outlets, such as upscale Nordstrom, with designer labels — Andrew Marc, Tommy Hilfiger, for example — and found them trimmed with fur from domestic dogs, even though the fur was advertised as fake.

"It's an industrywide deception," said Kristin Leppert, the head of the Humane Society's anti-fur campaign.

The investigation began after the society got a tip from someone who bought a coat with trim labeled as faux fur that felt real. Leppert and her team began buying coats from popular retailers and then had the coats tested by mass spectrometry, which measures the mass and sequence of proteins.

Of the 25 coats tested, 24 were mislabeled or misadvertised, the society said.

Three coats — one from Tommy Hilfiger's Web site ShopTommy.com, one from Nordstrom.com and one from Andrew Marc's MARC New York line sold on Bluefly.com — contained fur from domesticated dogs. The others had fur from raccoon dogs — a canine species native to Asia — or, in one case, wolves. The single correctly labeled coat was trimmed with coyote fur, but it was advertised as fake.

Most of the fur came from China.

In response to the Humane Society's investigation, Tommy Hilfiger stopped selling the

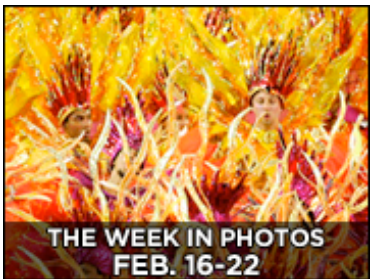
ADVERTISEMENT

NETFLIX
.com

You've heard of Netflix...

Now try us for FREE

[Click here](#)



ELSEWHERE ON THE WEB

CNN.COM

Hundreds gather for Smith's memorial

ABC NEWS

Post-Katrina Justice System Remains Shattered

USATODAY.COM

Ohio university mourns 6 killed after bus plunges onto interstate



YAHOO! NEWS "60 MINUTES"



Brain Man

He's a human calculator who sees numbers as shapes and colors.

In response to the Humane Society's investigation, Tommy Hilfinger stopped selling the fur-trimmed garment and said it was looking into the matter. "We were quite concerned to hear of this finding," said spokeswoman Wendi Kopsick.

Nordstrom called the 62 consumers who had purchased vests with dog fur trim to give them the opportunity to return the vests "because we would never want to deceive our customers in any way," spokeswoman Brooke White said. She said Nordstrom no longer buys fur trim products from the vendor, who had marketed the vests as faux fur.

Charles Jayson, chief executive of Andrew Marc, disputed the Humane Society and insisted in a statement that all fur on his coats labeled as raccoon contains "only farm-bred raccoon fur from Finland, and our items labeled 'faux fur' are a 100 percent synthetic fabric."

Michael Markarian, executive vice president of the Humane Society, said his group had traded letters with Andrew Marc over the test results and that the Humane Society stands by its research.

"Our tests have clearly concluded that not only is this real animal fur, but it's fur from domestic dogs. The fact that they don't believe us is unfortunate but we have confidence in our testing results," Markarian said.

But overall he said the Humane Society was pleased with retailers' response. "We think that the corporations want to do the right thing and that they are being deceived just as much as the consumers are being deceived," Markarian said.

Importing domestic dog and cat fur was outlawed in 2000. Intentionally importing and selling dog fur is a federal crime punishable by a \$10,000 fine for each violation.

Raccoon dogs look like oversized, fluffy raccoons and aren't kept as pets. Importing their fur is not illegal, but activists argue they are still a type of dog.

"This is an animal that is routinely killed by stomping them, or beating them, or skinning them alive," Markarian said. Video produced by Swiss Animal Protection and posted on the Internet shows raccoon dogs clubbed or slammed on the ground and some writhing, gasping and blinking as they are skinned alive.

The discovery of domestic dog fur is the latest twist in the investigation that ensnared retail giants Macy's and J.C. Penney late last year. Both of those retailers were discovered selling coats with raccoon dog fur labeled as raccoon.

J.C. Penney initially removed the offending garments from its stores around Christmas — but eventually it had employees scratch out the 'raccoon' label with black magic marker and put the coats back on the shelves. Macy's immediately pulled the items from its shelves.

Burlington Coat Factory also pulled some coats with mislabeled fur from their shelves. Rap artist Sean "Diddy" Combs stopped producing and selling coats from his Sean John line that had raccoon dog fur, and rapper Jay-Z pulled coats with raccoon dog from his Rocawear label.

Mislabeled fur is a misdemeanor punishable by a \$5,000 fine or a year in prison. Fur valued at less than \$150 is not required to be labeled.

A bill introduced by Reps. Jim Moran, D-Va., and Mike Ferguson, R-N.J., would close that loophole by requiring labels for all fur regardless of its value. It also would ban fur

from raccoon dogs.

"Americans don't want Lassie turned into a fur coat," Moran said. "In the U.S., we treat cats and dogs as pets, not trimmings for the latest fashion wear."

Other retailers the Humane Society said sold mislabeled raccoon dog fur included Lord & Taylor, BergdorfGoodman.com and Neiman Marcus.com. Designers whose clothes were mismarked included Donna Karan's DKNY and Michael Kors. A coat from Oscar de la Renta advertised as raccoon had raccoon dog fur.

Neiman Marcus, which owns Bergdorf Goodman, said it removed Bogner and Andrew Marc coats from its Web sites. Michael Kors said it was investigating, and a DKNY spokeswoman said the label was unaware that raccoon dog fur had been used.

Donna Karan's executive vice president for global marketing and communications, Patti Cohen, said, "While it is not illegal to use this type of fur, we have taken measures to ensure that it is never again used for any of our products."

A spokeswoman for Oscar de la Renta declined to comment.

—

On the Net:

The Humane Society of the United States: <http://www.hsus.org/>

[Email Story](#) [IM Story](#) [Printable View](#) (What happened to the "Discuss" option?)

RECOMMEND THIS STORY

Recommend It:

Average (555 votes)



» Recommended Stories

Full Coverage: Animal Rights & Welfare

NEWS STORIES

[Some coats may have fur from dogs](#) AP via Yahoo! News, Feb 23

[Vegas shelter euthanizes 1,000 animals](#) AP via Yahoo! News, Feb 16

[Chinese animal rights victory takes cats off the menu](#) at The Guardian (UK), Feb 13

[When PETA Attacks...Mrs. Trump!](#) , Feb 08

FEATURE ARTICLES

[Africa's animal refuge: The Ugandan Wildlife Education Centre](#) at The Independent (UK), Nov 27

[An iguana invasion: What to do?](#) at Christian Science Monitor, Nov 22

OPINION & EDITORIALS

[Meat Eaters Without The Guilt](#) at The Washington Post (reg. req'd), Aug 14

[A life but not as nature intended](#) at Gulf News., Aug 11

U.S. News

[6 dead in bus crash, college team aboard](#) AP

[Astronaut charged with kidnap attempt](#) AP

[20 dead as tornadoes hit Ga., Ala., Mo.](#) AP

[3 acquitted in Chicago club stampede](#) AP

Most Viewed - U.S.

[6 dead in bus crash, college team aboard](#) AP

[20 dead as tornadoes hit Ga., Ala., Mo.](#) AP

[Astronaut charged with kidnap attempt](#) AP

[Police: Puppies are dognapped in L.A.](#) AP