



Fur flies over dog-fur claim

Woman discovers coat she purchased was not what she expected

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QUEENSBURY * A few weeks ago, Rebecca Dumas' co-worker told her a story she'd heard about retailers who had blacked out coat labels in order to cover up descriptions of the garments' fur trim.

In mid-March, ABC News reported that a Humane Society of the United States investigation found some stores were selling coats trimmed with dog fur, even though the tags said "faux fur" or "raccoon fur."

A story on the same topic from Fox News reported that JC Penney had inked out the portion of its coat labels containing the raccoon fur description.

When Dumas inspected her own coat, which she purchased at JC Penney in Aviation Mall in January, she was surprised.

"We heard they marked the label out, so we decided to check mine, and sure enough, it had been blacked out," said Dumas, a Hudson Falls resident.

Concerned about the origin of the fur on her coat, Dumas, who owns three dogs and two cats, contacted officials at the local JC Penney store.

"I just really wanted an explanation," she said, shaking her head. "All I was offered was the last sales price without a receipt. I feel like JC Penney was practicing dishonesty and trying to hide the truth.

"I'm not a fanatic or anything, but I don't expect to be wearing my dog on my coat."

According to JC Penney officials, however, Dumas wasn't wearing domestic dog on her coat, and the company wasn't trying to hide anything from her.

"We found out in December that labels identified the fur as raccoon when it was actually Asiatic raccoon," explained company spokesman Tim Lyons. "In order to be in compliance with (Federal Trade Commission) labeling rules, we had to take off the reference."

While the Asiatic raccoon -- or raccoon dog, as it's also known -- is a type of canine, Lyons stressed that it isn't the kind people keep in their homes.

"It's not a pet dog; it's not like a domestic dog," he said.

The University of Michigan Museum of Zoology Animal Diversity Web site identifies the raccoon dog, *Nyctereutes procyonoides*, as a member of the canine family found in eastern Siberia, northern China, North Vietnam, Korea and Japan.

"It has the appearance of a small, fox-like canid with fur markings similar to those of a raccoon," the site states. "Japan, Finland, and the former USSR benefit from trading the fur. Pelts are used for necklets, collars and fur coats."

Lyons said JC Penney was able to black out the label and sell the coats without re-identifying the fur as Asiatic raccoon because of Federal Trade Commission rules.

According to the FTC Web site, fur does not need to be specifically identified "if the cost to a manufacturer of fur trim used on a garment, or a manufacturer's selling price of a fur product, is \$150 or less."

Dumas said she purchased her coat on sale for \$108, down from an original price of about \$300.

Even though JC Penney has legal explanations for its actions, the fact that Dumas had trouble determining what she purchased still doesn't sit well with her.

She said she won't try to return her coat for a refund.

"I don't care about the money. I don't want the money," Dumas said.

"I just want them to do right. The only English part of the label that says anything about animal fur is covered with Magic Marker."

Editors Note: The headline and photo captions for this story contained incorrect information that was corrected at 11:15 a.m. on March 29, 2007