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European Parliament votes to ban cat and dog fur trade in EU

The Associated Press

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STRASBOURG, France: Trade in products containing cat or dog fur will be banned in the European Union, following public calls to outlaw a practice many people consider unethical and animal rights advocates call barbaric.

European Parliament lawmakers on Tuesday overwhelmingly approved the ban, which has to be approved by national governments and would come into force from 2009.

The European Commission says cat and dog fur can be found in some clothing, personal accessories and soft toys being sold on the European market, either falsely labeled as another kind of fur or hidden within the product.

But it said that due to the secretive nature of the trade it was hard to quantify the amount of cat and dog fur entering the EU market and that there was no official data.

"I received on behalf of concerned citizens a petition signed by over a quarter of a million people calling for us to bring in that ban. ... There is plenty of evidence of the inhuman treatment of cats and dogs bred for fur," said British Labour deputy Arlene McCarthy

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Fifteen EU member states already have national legislation on the trade in cat and dog fur, with laws varying from a ban on rearing cats and dogs for fur production to a ban on the import of such fur or simply labeling requirements.

Campaigners have claimed millions of animals are bred for their fur — mostly in China and other Asian nations. Animal rights group Humane Society International said in 2005 it investigated and uncovered dog and cat fur production that had taken place in the Czech Republic — a member of the EU since 2004.

HSI estimates around 2 million cats and dogs are killed for fur each year, with an estimated 5,400 cats and dogs killed

in China each day.

Under the ban, sale of cat and dog fur in the 27-nation bloc will only be allowed for educational or taxidermy purposes under strict conditions.

The new guidelines were drafted by the EU executive after evidence surfaced in 2003 that cat and dog fur products were still traded in the EU despite a voluntary code of conduct by fur traders.

The EU parliamentarians scrapped a proposed exception that would have allowed traders to sell cat and dog fur provided it did not come from animals bred or killed for fur production.

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"The EU is taking an important step towards ending the cruel and brutal way in which these animals are slaughtered for their fur. It is high time that a ban on the trade in cat and dog fur was introduced in the EU, with other countries, like the U.S. and Australia, having had bans in place for a number of years," said Green deputy Heide Ruehle.

EU member governments will be responsible for enforcing the new legislation. Cat and dog fur products will be seized at the borders and importers and traders will be fined, the EU said.

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