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# Fashionable morals

## Your faux fur may actually be the real thing

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Autumn has brought cooler days and with winter just around the bend, stores are beginning to display scarves, mittens, hats, boots and coats. But is that faux fur really faux?

The fictional fur-coat-frocked villainess Cruella DeVille and celebrity Jennifer Lopez aid the illusion that one must either be evil or rich to wear fur. However, this barbaric fashion is unfortunately more accessible than the average consumer knows. Last season, Aeropostle's \$3 scarves and Gap's \$20 hats were both labeled rabbit fur.

Checking the tags is a good start, but it may not be enough to make an informed decision about your purchase.

Under the Fur Products Labeling Act of 1951, garments containing less than \$150 worth of animal fur are not required to list fur as a material on the label. Not only is this law difficult to enforce, but a rabbit pelt may be worth as little as \$5. This means that popular "faux" fur-collared coats and boots can legally be real animal fur. This law has been around for 56 years, and animal activists are still continuing to petition to have this loophole eradicated.

The U.S. Dog and Cat Protection Act of 2000 prohibits the import and export of products containing dog and cat fur, but again, no label is required if it contains less than \$150 worth of fur. In February 2007, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) tested fur-trimmed garments imported from China and found that 24 out of 25 contained dog fur, making 96 percent of them either mislabeled or not labeled at all.

Over half of all clothing sold in the United States comes from China and other Asian countries that wealthy American corporations use for cheap labor. Over just the past year, Chinese imports have caused American deaths with contaminated pet food and toothpaste, and several baby products have contained lead. Too many goods are imported into America for the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to feasibly check everything. HSUS petitioned the FTC in March 2007 to enforce the two previously mentioned acts, but clearly we cannot rely on the government to test all of our products.

Buy local and be an informed shopper when you purchase your cold weather gear so you know exactly what you are getting. Several department stores and major online retailers sell items with real fur without listing it on the label. Retailer Guess? just announced that they will stop selling fur in 2008, yet between September 2007 and April 2008 they will be selling more fur than ever before. Fur needs to stop being sold now, not later. Businesses will only sell profitable items; therefore, by not purchasing fur, consumers will be sending the message to stop slaughtering animals for their fur.

Hundreds of years ago fur may have been necessary to keep people warm, but now there are many cruelty-free, warm options including cotton, fleece, polyester, acrylic, soy, bamboo and hemp. It is savage and cruel that each year over two million animals living in tiny wire cages will be bludgeoned, then skinned alive and turned into garments. Make sure that if you wear faux fur that it really is faux, because fur looks best on the animals it comes from.