DO FUR SALE BANS IMPACT PEOPLE’S ABILITY TO WEAR FUR?

No, these laws only apply to the sale of new fur products.

HOW IS FUR PRODUCED?

The vast majority of fur items come from animals who are raised on fur farms in factory-like conditions. Animals, including foxes, minks, and rabbits, are typically crammed into tiny wire cages and unable to engage in most of their natural behaviors. They frequently resort to self-mutilation, obsessive pacing, and infanticide. On some fur farms, animals have no protection from the heat and cold. On other farms, animals are kept in cages in barns that are poorly ventilated and high concentrations of ammonia — a byproduct of animals’ waste — burns their eyes and throats.

To maintain the integrity of their skin and fur — the “pelt” — animals are usually killed via suffocation, electrocution, gassing, or poisoning. Sometimes, they are bludgeoned in the head or face repeatedly. In anal or vaginal electrocution, the electrodes are attached to the animal’s face and genitals to induce a heart attack. Animals are frequently skinned alive while still conscious.

What are fur sale bans?

Fur sale bans typically prohibit the sale of new fur products, including items like coats and hats. These bans often extend to accessories that have fur adornments like pom poms or collars, as well as home décor. Existing fur sale bans have included exemptions for secondhand fur products as well as products used for religious or tribal purposes.

While most commercially sold fur comes from fur farms, some animals are trapped in the wild. Trapping is largely regulated at the state level, and most states provide only minimal protections for fur-bearing animals. In some states, for example, it’s legal to set a trap and not check it for days. Desperate and terrified, animals will sometimes chew their own legs off in an attempt to escape. Trappers may shoot, strangle, drown, or bludgeon trapped animals.
HAVE ANY U.S. STATES OR CITIES PROHIBITED THE SALE OF FUR?
In 2019, California made history as the first state in the nation to ban the sale of new fur products. The law was enacted after several California cities — West Hollywood (2011), Berkeley (2017), San Francisco (2018), and Los Angeles (2019) — passed similar laws. In 2020, fur bans were proposed in the Hawaii, New York, and Rhode Island legislatures. We expect additional states and municipalities to consider fur bans in 2021.

Furthermore, California recently banned commercial and recreational fur trapping with the passage of the Wildlife Protection Act of 2019. Trapping for sanitation and public health is still permitted.

IS FUR STILL POPULAR IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY?
Fashion designers are moving away from using fur in their clothing and accessories. Approximately 300 brands and retailers have adopted fur-free policies including Macy's, Versace, Bloomingdale's, Gucci, and Prada. Magazines have also taken a stand against fur, for example, InStyle magazine banned fur from its pages in 2018. The abundance of high-quality alternatives to fur, in conjunction to shifting consumer preferences, makes fur an increasingly unpopular choice for retailers and designers.

IS FUR ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY?
Fur farming involves the use of numerous toxic chemicals and heavy metals. During the tanning and dying process carcinogenic chemicals, like chromium and formaldehyde, are applied to prevent the pelts from decaying. These chemicals leach into the environment, endanger the health of farm workers, and may ultimately be absorbed through the skin of people who wear fur products. Furthermore, animals on fur farms produce a tremendous amount of waste that contaminates the soil and waterways and contributes to climate change.

Fur production is so toxic that when the European Fur Breeders’ Association ran ads claiming it was “eco-friendly to wear fur,” the Advertising Standards Authority, the U.K. agency that regulates advertising, ruled it was misleading and banned the campaign.¹

HAVE OTHER COUNTRIES PASSED LAWS REGULATING OR BANNING FUR PRODUCTION OR SALES?
Numerous countries and international cities have passed laws prohibiting fur farming or banning the importation of certain fur products. For example, more than a dozen European countries, including the United Kingdom, Belgium, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Norway, have outlawed fur production.

Other countries, like Sweden, have enacted regulations so restrictive that they serve as a de facto ban on fur farming. Additionally, India ended the importation of fur in 2017, and São Paolo, Brazil banned the import and sale of fur in 2015.

¹ https://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/mar/21/eco-friendly-fur-ad-banned
HOW DOES FUR FARMING ENDANGER PUBLIC HEALTH?

Whenever animals are intensively confined without regard for their health or welfare, public health is endangered. Fur farms confine thousands of animals to small barns or open-air cage systems. Sanitation is poor, and veterinary care is almost non-existent. As a result, these farms are breeding grounds for pathogens that ultimately result in zoonotic diseases — harmful germs carried by animals that can spread to people and cause illness. In the spring of 2020, SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease abbreviated as COVID-19, was found on more than a dozen fur farms in the Netherlands. Minks, cats, and humans working on the farm tested positive for the disease. Dutch health officials believe two farm workers initially passed the infection to the minks though it is also “plausible” that some workers later became infected from the animals.²

In 2013, the Netherlands voted to phase out fur farming by 2024. Due to the fur farms’ role in the spread of COVID-19, the Dutch Members of Parliament voted to shut down mink fur farms immediately instead.

HAVE FUR BANS BEEN CHALLENGED IN COURT?

While fur industry groups have attacked fur sale bans in court, their lawsuits have been unsuccessful. In early 2020, the International Fur Federation filed a constitutional challenge to the San Francisco fur sale ban. In July 2020, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California dismissed the lawsuit, ruling that the Constitution’s Commerce Clause does not preclude San Francisco from ridding its marketplace of cruel fur products.

²https://time.com/5875031/europe-mink-farms-coronavirus/