

Lesley Fox: Selling cat and dog fur is legal in Canada

It's that time of year when kids will start hitting the local mall in droves with mom and dad in tow. Their mission? To find the latest and greatest fall fashion for back-to-school.

But lurking among the racks of sweaters, pants, socks, shoes, and countless jackets could be bits of real fur trim. Not just from Canada's wildlife either, but possibly from Fluffy and Muffy.

That's right. In Canada, it's shockingly legal to import and sell cat and dog fur.

According to investigations by several prominent animal-protection organizations, including the Humane Society of the United States, it's estimated that each year over two million dogs and cats are raised and killed for their fur throughout China, the Philippines, and Taiwan.

Their skins are used to make fur trim on coats, toys, hats, and figurines.

Countries including the United States as well as the European Union have banned cat and dog fur. But sadly, Canada remains behind the times.

Making the situation more desperate, under the Canadian Textile and Labelling Act, animal hides or pelts are not required to be labelled.

For years, our antifur group, Fur-Bearer Defenders, has lobbied the Canadian government to ban the import and sale of Canada and dog fur.

It's been a real fight.

Canada's former trade minister, David Emerson once responded to us in a letter: "Adopting an import ban on dog and cat fur such as you suggest could undermine Canada's case against implementation of import bans imposed on Canadian seal products."

In plain English, Canada is using the suffering of one species (cats and dogs) as leverage to continue the suffering of another species (seals).

To increase the strength of our campaign, Fur-Bearer Defenders has reached out to a Canadian celebrity, the Juno award-winning, multi-platinum record selling artist Bif Naked.

Naked recently wrote an open letter to the Canadian government on behalf of Fur-Bearer Defenders, expressing her support for Bill C-439. This is a relatively new private member's bill that would amend the Hazardous Products Act and ban products made with cat and dog fur from entering the country.

While the bill may never see the light of day, it is bringing some much-needed attention to the issue.

National media outlets have begun to expose the dog and cat trade and undercover footage of this cruel industry was aired nationwide.

As you can imagine, proponents of the fur industry are using smoke and mirrors, and are keen to keep this issue under wraps.

On its Web site, the Fur Council of Canada, the marketing body for the Canadian fur industry, tries to reassure the public that cat and dog fur is a non-issue.

The Fur Council touts its' "formal policy" confirming "Canadian fur manufacturers and retailers do NOT use domesticated dog and cat fur in the garments they produce or sell". Furthermore the Fur Council states: "the Fur Council of Canada wishes to confirm that the Canadian trade does not buy, sell or use any fur from these species".

Don't get too excited. Regardless of this "policy", it's still legal to import, buy, and sell cat and dog fur in Canada.

Also worth mentioning is that the Fur Council of Canada has no legal authority, and cannot control what fur items are imported into Canada or what fur items are being sold in department stores, dollar stores, corner stores, and gift shops.

The onus of avoiding dog and cat fur is solely on consumers, and without adequate fur labelling laws, it's buyer beware.

In the meantime, we encourage every one who is concerned about the domestic cat and dog fur trade to contact their member of Parliament and ask them to support Bill C-439 and to pave the way for further legislation to give all fur-bearing animals more protection.

It's the least we can do on behalf of our beloved companion animals who give us their unconditional love each and every day.

Lesley Fox is the executive director of [Fur-Bearer Defenders](#) [3], an animal-protection organization based in Burnaby.