

COMMERCE

Hermès says considering new name for iconic Birkin handbag

August 28, 2015



Hermès Birkin handbag; image courtesy of Portero

By STAFF REPORTS

French leather goods house Hermès is speaking with actress Jane Birkin about potentially renaming its handbag bearing her surname.

[Sign up now](#)

Luxury Daily

Last month, following the release of a PETA video claiming to show one of Hermès' crocodile suppliers mistreating animals, Ms. Birkin put out a statement saying she wanted her name to be removed from the style, not wanting to be associated with practices she disagrees with. For Hermès, a name change may enable the brand to start fresh as it looks into raising the ethical standards of its producers.

Name game

Reuters reports that Hermès CEO Axel Dumas said there were no lawyers involved at this time, but that the brand and Ms. Birkin are simply "in talks."

Mr. Dumas also said during the company's half-year earnings presentation on Aug. 28, "We have preserved a relationship of trust and friendship with Jane Birkin."

The Birkin style originated in 1981 when Ms. Birkin was seated next to then-CEO Jean-Louis Dumas on a flight, and as she was putting her bag in the overhead compartment,

some of the contents fell out. After hearing her talk about not being able to find a good bag in a weekender size, and then Mr. Dumas said he would make one for her.

During the flight, the design was drawn out, and the Birkin was born. According to a [Telegraph](#) article from 2012, Hermès still pays a royalty to the actress each year, which she can use to support charities.

French leather goods house Hermès is facing continued pressure from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals following the activist organization's allegations in June of mistreatment of alligators and crocodiles that eventually become its handbags and watches. The organization released video footage showing crocodiles living in crowded pools and being cut while still alive and able to feel pain ([see story](#)).

Hermès is currently auditing the Texas facility featured in the film to decide whether to continue working with it, and it is also pushing higher ethical practices across its suppliers.

While Hermès is looking to move forward, the issue remains at the forefront of PETA's actions, as well as remaining in some consumer's minds.

The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals recently purchased a single share in Hermès, which will ultimately allow the organization to attend shareholder meetings. While the meetings usually take place in May or June, the move is likely more of a publicity stunt to capitalize on the attention that has focused on the issue recently ([see story](#)).

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.