

RETAIL

## Fur flies as fashion debates its future

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*Michael Kors is breaking from using real fur. Image credit: Michael Kors*

By SARAH RAMIREZ

As more luxury brands eliminate or reduce the use of animal fur in their items, the shift towards more ethical manufacturing is too slow for some environmental activists while consumer groups argue that fur bans negatively impact customer freedom.

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Fashion labels Prada and Burberry are among the latest to draw attention to their use of fur, while a major U.S. city moves towards banning the sale of new fur products. Reactions from environmental and consumer groups have been mixed, leaving brands and shoppers caught somewhere in the middle.

Fur-free future?

Although exotic furs have long been associated with luxury, more brands have been vocal about going fur-free.

Earlier this month, British fashion label Burberry announced updated sustainability practices, including prohibiting the use of real fur in its designs, as consumers become more sustainably conscious ([see story](#)).

Starting from with cruise 2019 season, Italian handbag label Furla will opt for a faux alternative to real fur.



*Furla has joined the fur-free movement. Image credit: Furla*

According to Furla, the technical advances in faux fur have rendered the use of real fur unnecessary.

Prior to Furla, brands including Gucci, Armani, Michael Kors and Jimmy Choo opted out of fur. Retailers Yoox Net-A-Porter Group and Rent the Runway have also made pledges not to carry real fur ([see story](#)).

Italian fashion label Prada's continued use of fur recently drew ire from animal rights supporters, as Fur Free Alliance, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and other groups bombarded the company with calls and social media messages to stop fur production according to *Women's Wear Daily*.

Additionally, PETA has previously criticized Prada or its use of ostrich, snake, alligator and crocodile skins ([see story](#)).

In response, Prada reiterated its commitment to reducing use of fur and focusing on more sustainable materials.

"The Prada Group which has always distinguished itself for the research and innovation of the materials used in its collections has recently increased the use of technical fabrics that represent both an alternative to materials of animal provenance and a concrete application of sustainable production," the label said in a statement.



*Prada plans to reduce, but not fully eliminate, fur production. Image credit: Prada*

On behalf of PETA, actress and activist Pamela Anderson criticized Prada for its reluctance to commit to a fur-free future.

"I was disappointed to learn that instead of going fur-free, Prada has chosen merely to reduce the amount of animal pelts that it sells," Ms. Anderson said in a statement. "A 'gradual' reduction is no consolation to animals."

Proposed legislation in Los Angeles would eliminate the burden on brands to change their fur practices by banning the sale of new fur products outright.

The Los Angeles city council voted unanimously to draft an ordinance that will prohibit the manufacture and sale of new fur products, as reported by *The Los Angeles Times*. The proposed ban would go into effect in two years after its approval and cover clothes, shoes, hats and other accessories.

The Center for Consumer Freedom reacted to the proposal with a full-page ad criticizing PETA for lobbying against the manufacturing of animal products, such as fur, and restricting consumer choice.

Sustainable materials?

While the use of fur in high fashion has been a contentious topic for years, other luxe materials are drawing increased scrutiny. Consumers are becoming more aware of sustainability issues, and are expecting more transparency and initiatives from luxury brands.

The Responsible Luxury Initiative encourages luxury brands, particularly in fashion, to invest in the protection and restoration of crucial ecosystems. This will help keep raw materials, such as wool, leather and cotton, available for those same luxury retailers.

High-end brands can also use their influence to promote the development of more innovative and sustainable materials ([see story](#)).

Italian fashion house Bottega Veneta has had eco-friendly and cruelty-free values within its company, well before it became in vogue to care for the environment.

Consumers now greatly care about where their products come from, and so does Bottega Veneta. The brand knows

where the skin for its leather is coming from and has even begun working with chrome-free leather.

Chrome-free leather is a new eco-friendly version of leather that provides alternatives to the traditional but yet extremely harmful tanning system that uses damaging chromium ([see story](#)).

Alternative materials, however, come with their own environmental concerns that lobbying groups are quick to acknowledge.

"Petroleum-based faux fur products are the complete antithesis of the concept of responsible environmental conservation," the Fur Information Council of America said in a statement after Gucci announced plans to eliminate the use of fur ([see story](#)).

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