

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

What does Kering's fur ban mean for luxury?

September 27, 2021



Kering houses will no longer use animal fur. Image credit: Kering

By KATIE TAMOLA

After French luxury conglomerate Kering earned headlines and praise for its official group-wide ban of fur, pressure may grow on other luxury brands and groups to follow suit.

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On Sept. 24, French luxury conglomerate Kering announced that it has stopped using fur, making it the first luxury group to ban fur entirely. With such a momentous announcement, many are left wondering the genuine motivations behind the decision and whether other luxury groups will follow.

"The announcement from Kering was bold but not surprising as many of its brands already have a no-fur policy and many governments around the world have been making noise to impose a fur ban," said Diana Verde Nieto, cofounder of [Positive Luxury](#), London.

"People around the world have a better understanding of our natural world accelerating and the speed and uptake of trends that we already saw brewing pre-COVID-19 including things like plant-based diets, the plastic-free movement and the overall consumption of a more positive luxury."

A furless future

The luxury conglomerate's new policy will become effective with the fall 2022 collections ([see story](#)).

Kering, which owns several luxury brands including Gucci, Balenciaga, Yves Saint Laurent, Bottega Veneta and Alexander McQueen, has not necessarily shied away from publicly approaching the subject of fur.



Gucci announced a fur-free policy in 2017. Image credit: Gucci

In 2017, Gucci became the first Kering brand to publicly make a fur-free pledge. The fashion label sold its remaining fur items in a charity auction benefitting Italian animal rights group LAV and the Humane Society ([see story](#)).

"The fashion industry, apparel and luxury brands and retailers have been removing fur from their lines for decades," said Marie Driscoll, managing director of luxury and fashion at [Coresight Research](#), New York. "This really isn't new and reflects consumer sentiment towards fur as a fashion statement.

"With the increased supply of faux fur that looks genuine and confers status, the fashion industry has an alternative without the stigma of real fur," she said.

While Balenciaga, Bottega Veneta and Alexander McQueen have ostensibly not used fur in their offerings for years, the brands have never announced specific policies outright banning the material.

Yves Saint Laurent and Brioni are two Kering brands that have recently utilized fur, and [Women's Wear Daily](#) reports that the group recently worked with Mark Oaten, the chief executive of the International Fur Federation. Thus, news of the group's fur-free future has left some perplexed.

According to [WWD](#), Mr. Oaten worked with Kering on developing the recently released Furmark certification system, a traceability program that gives garments QR codes that map their histories, from farm to manufacturer.



Mytheresa has pledged to remove all fur products by the end of 2022. Image credit: Mytheresa

"With this announcement, the efforts and milestones achieved, and work on regulations over the past many years, will go to waste," Mr. Oaten said in a statement.

Despite being under tremendous pressure from conscious consumers and activist groups, fur remains a lucrative facet within the global fashion landscape, and not everyone wants to see it go. Smaller luxury brands, such as Michael Kors, are still selling furs through Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue as the retailers phase out the products ([see story](#)).

Following suit?

Kering's definitive fur-free future has been defined this year, but the group has also made public strides for animal advocacy.

In 2019, Kering set its own animal welfare standards, covering species throughout its supply chain, such as cattle, sheep and goats. To develop its guidelines, Kering consulted research and legislation and worked with experts

including scientists, NGOs, farmers and herders over three years ([see story](#)).

A fur-free approach appears to be permeating the luxury fashion sphere, as more and more brands announce their plans to eliminate the material.

In June, U.S. retailer Neiman Marcus announced its plans to go fully fur-free by 2023, as more retailers distance themselves from animal furs ([see story](#)).

After banning exotic skins earlier this year, ecommerce retailer Mytheresa announced in August that it will be fur-free starting spring/summer 2022 ([see story](#)). British retailer Selfridges ceased selling items made with exotic skins in 2020 ([see story](#)).

More city and national governments, including San Francisco, have also taken steps to stop sales of fur, further hurting the business case for luxury labels continuing to sell real animal fur.

Will other luxury conglomerates follow in Kering's footsteps? Time will tell.

As of September 2021, French luxury goods conglomerate LVMH Mot Hennessy Louis Vuitton still utilized fur and animal skins across several brands. In August, animal advocacy group PETA once again called for the group to cease these practices.

"Undoubtedly the rest of the fashion world, luxury and beyond, is watching closely to what happens next, with feelings from the consumer, retailers, non-government organizations and governments," Ms. Verde Nieto said. "We all should watch this space."

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