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From The Times

November 21, 2006

Cat and dog fur trade banned by EU

David Charter, Europe Correspondent

Would you knowingly wear dog or cat fur?

Trading in dog and cat fur is to be banned in Europe after mounting evidence that unscrupulous manufacturers are using cheap pelts from China to line coats and gloves and to make children's toys.

Importers will have to prove that fur trimming is not canine or feline under a European Commission directive proposed yesterday after a public campaign led by celebrities including Lady McCartney, the former model Heather Mills.

US investigators estimate that about two million dogs and cats are slaughtered each year for their pelts, which are often disguised by dyeing and can even be labelled as artificial fur. A BBC documentary featuring Lady McCartney found that fur trimmings on sale at market stalls along Oxford Street in London were made from dog and cat pelts.

The ban is likely to become law next year after concern at the discovery of clothing, toys and rugs labelled "Gae wolf", "Asian jackal" or "Corsac fox" that turned out to be dog and cat fur. Pelts are often passed off as fake fur because they are cheaper than the synthetic material.

Britain is not among the five European countries that have a ban on dog and cat fur imports, but the Government said that it had been pushing for an EU-wide measure.

The Conservative MEP Struan Stevenson visited a Scottish gift shop and bought a figurine of a cat. When the item was DNA-tested it was found to be made from dog fur. This proved that British consumers could unwittingly be buying items made from the pelts.

Clothing has also been found on sale in EU countries, including Italy, France, Belgium, Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany. Rick Swain, a researcher for the US-based Humane Society International, which found and tested the dog and cat fur clothes, said: "Cat fur is often used for a lining in gloves because it is softer and shorter. Once it is dyed it is very difficult to tell from just about anything you want to make it look like. Dog is coarser fur and harder to disguise."

The proposed directive would look to end the production, marketing and trade of cat and dog fur throughout the EU and establish a system of information exchange on its detection at Europe's borders.

Markos Kyprianou, the EU Consumer Protection Commissioner, said: "The message that we have received from EU consumers



"I have no problem with people taking drugs" Jeremy Clarkson

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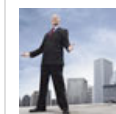
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has been loud and clear. They do not find it acceptable to farm cats and dogs for their fur, nor do they want products containing such fur sold on the European market."

The issue received extra publicity from Lady McCartney, who twice visited the European Parliament to campaign for a ban.

On one occasion she broke down in tears at the screening of a video showing cats and dogs being rounded up and skinned alive to avoid the cost of humane killing.

Mr Kyprianou stopped short of calling for every product containing fur to have a label detailing its exact origin because he said it would be too punitive for producers of smaller, cheaper goods.

The International Fur Trader Federation said that it did not see the need for a ban, given its own voluntary code that prohibited dealing in dog and cat fur. A spokeswoman said: "For many years the European fur trade has not traded in cat and dog fur and in 2002 our members signed a voluntary agreement not to trade in dog and cat fur. No evidence of this trade has been shown to us and no one appears able to produce any when asked. We do question why it's necessary to spend time and resources drafting legislation to ban a trade that does not exist."

Cruel business

2 million dogs and cats are killed for fur in China annually
Up to 24 pelts are used in the average fur coat
10,000 letters supporting a ban were sent to the EU
232,146 people urging a ban left their signatures on Lady McCartney's animal rights group's website
5 out of 93 fur items on sale are found to have canine DNA



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