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## CROCODILIAN LEATHER

Crocodile, caiman and alligator leather, used for bags, shoes, belts and other accessories, is a cruel industry involving more than 1.5 million animals annually<sup>1</sup>. Poor transparency and a lack of robust certification initiatives enable not only the unregulated exploitation of wild populations,<sup>2,3,4</sup> but a complete disregard for the welfare of the animals involved, especially in countries that have no husbandry guidelines or codes of practice in place.

Consumers are increasingly turning away from crocodile and alligator leather<sup>7</sup> due to its impact on animals and the environment<sup>8</sup>. An international YouGov poll commissioned by FOUR PAWS in 2021 shows that almost three quarters (74%) of people are concerned about the welfare of animals in the exotic leather industry. Leading fashion brands are responding to this shift and banning the use of exotic leather in their products<sup>9</sup>.

Brands taking a stand against exotic reptile leather:

ADIDAS	NIKE
KARL LAGERFELD	PAUL SMITH
CHANEL	PHILLIP LIM
DIANE VON FURSTENBERG	PUMA
HUGO BOSS	SELFRIDGES
GUESS	TOPSHOP
MULBERRY	VIVIENNE WESTWOOD
	VICTORIA BECKHAM

*"We are committed to supporting the shift to a more ethical and sustainable fashion industry by providing the consumer with innovative and sophisticated alternatives. DVF will not incorporate the use of exotic skins, mohair, angora or fur."*

Diane von Furstenberg spokesperson on decision to ban exotic leather.

INDUSTRY ACTION

### LARGEST EXPORTERS<sup>5</sup>



### LARGEST IMPORTERS<sup>6</sup>





**Replace**

Only by banning the use of crocodile and alligator skin can brands successfully help to protect and safeguard the welfare of these animals. Whether the skins are sourced from wild or captive crocodiles and alligators, animal welfare and the stability of wild populations simply cannot be guaranteed.

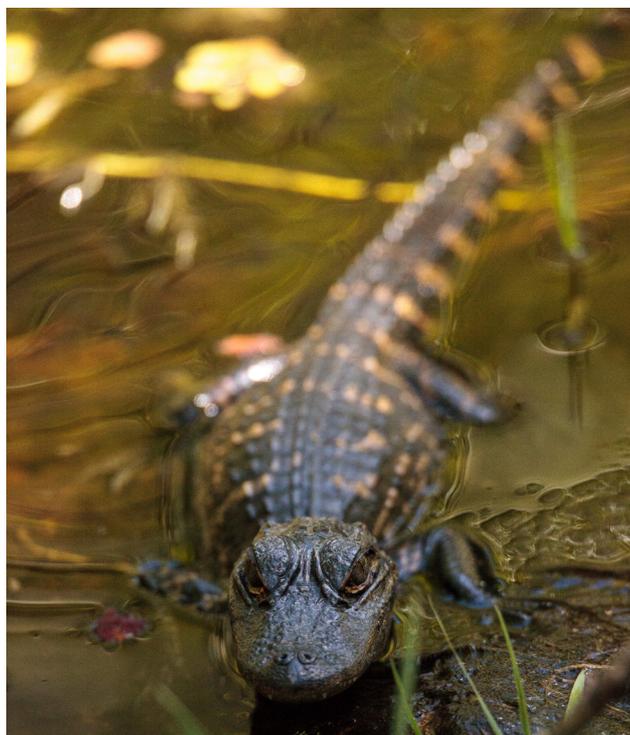
Replace crocodile, caiman and alligator leather with a humane alternative such as Piñatex made using pineapple leaves, or with leather<sup>10</sup> made from apples<sup>11</sup>, mushrooms<sup>12</sup>, or coffee<sup>13</sup>. Or source the latest innovation in leather alternatives, bio-fabricated leather<sup>14</sup>.



**Be transparent**

With consumers increasingly demanding transparency<sup>15</sup>, communicating the steps you take to improve your supply chain has never been more important. It demonstrates your animal welfare and environmental credentials and helps consumers make an informed choice.

Ensure to transparently communicate your current use of animal derived materials and your timeframe for supply chain improvements. Ideally this information would form part of a robust and comprehensive overarching animal welfare policy, which is clearly communicated to suppliers.



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**Animal welfare issues**

- Crocodiles are solitary animals<sup>16</sup> but, in crocodile farms, they spend their entire lives in crowded conditions<sup>17</sup>, unable to walk, swim, or express any of the behaviours they would in the wild. They are often wounded through fighting and develop deformities due to the unnatural conditions in which they are kept.
- Adequate veterinary treatment is rarely provided to sick or injured animals and wounds easily become infected in water that is polluted by overcrowding.
- Crocodile breeding requires specialist knowledge and skills,<sup>18, 19</sup> but staff on crocodile farms are often unskilled in their care and, as such, often the crocodiles' most basic needs are neglected.
- Crocodiles have two-centimetre-thick skulls and slaughtermen resort to barbaric methods including repeated blows with axes or baseball bats to smash through the animal's skull.
- Crocodiles suffer extreme pain during the slaughter process, they often die a slow death and some even experience the unimaginable agony of being skinned alive<sup>20, 21</sup>.
- Farmed crocodiles are usually slaughtered at two to three years of age. In the wild they can live for 70 years.



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Australia and the USA have introduced codes of practice or guidelines for farming crocodilians for their skins,<sup>22, 23</sup> and, while we are encouraged by the steps these countries have taken, the guidelines are inadequate and don't conform to the most recent scientific evidence on animal welfare. What most crocodilian farmers and stakeholders consider as good indicators of welfare (basic requirements, such as good nutrition, good bodyweight, good reproduction), are in fact poor, outdated and misleading measures of welfare, especially when not considering animal welfare as a whole<sup>24</sup>.

### Environmental concerns

Tanning animal skin to produce leather is a toxic process that can harm both the environment and the people involved. 90% of leather production globally uses chromium tanning<sup>25</sup> which produces a highly toxic mix of chemicals and gases, including the carcinogenic chromium (IV)<sup>26</sup>. In developing countries that do not have adequate environmental protection laws, the untreated toxic wastewater, potentially containing chromium, lead, arsenic, and acids, is often discharged directly into local waterways<sup>27</sup>, with disastrous impacts.

### Human health impacts

The adverse health impacts caused to workers by exposure to such toxic chemicals are well documented and include a high incidence of cancer<sup>28</sup>, respiratory<sup>29</sup>, skin, and eye problems<sup>30</sup>. These issues are compounded by a lack of adequate legal protections for tannery workers, low rates of pay, use of minors, inadequate or non-existent workplace health and safety protocols, and inadequate healthcare.

**FOUR PAWS** calls on fashion companies to stop using crocodile and alligator leather; to reduce the number of animal derived materials used overall, in favour of sustainable animal-free alternatives; and to ensure that the animals which continue to be used within domesticated animal supply chains experience an excellent state of welfare.

For more information, review the **FOUR PAWS** policy development guidelines.

“ Together we can drive an animal-friendly fashion future, and create a world where people treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding. ”



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