

INDUSTRY FACT SHEET



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KANGAROO LEATHER

Kangaroo leather, used for sporting equipment such as shoes and gloves, is part of an industry worth AUD 25 million¹ in Gross Value Product and involves the slaughter of 1.6 million kangaroos on average every year². Hunting often occurs at night with virtually no monitoring³ and, in addition, to the kangaroos that are killed and taken, it's estimated that hundreds of thousands of joeys are killed by swinging them against a hard surface, such as a vehicle⁴, or are left to die from starvation, exposure, or predation⁵.

The widescale death and suffering of Australian wildlife during the catastrophic 2019-2020 Australian bushfires captured national and international attention. But, despite the death of over 3 billion Australian animals, kangaroos and other macropods were still slaughtered during and shortly after the devastating bushfires. Even prior to this event, concerns were raised that the methods used to

calculate populations of kangaroos and other macropods were not in line with best practice methods, and likely gravely overstated.

Kangaroo killing is highly controversial, both in Australia and around the world, and there have been numerous high-profile campaigns aimed at stopping the industry which represents the largest slaughter of land-based wildlife in the world. An international YouGov poll commissioned by FOUR PAWS in 2021 shows that 84% of adults globally are concerned for the welfare of kangaroos. In countries such as South Africa, Switzerland, and Austria, these rates increase to 90% and above⁷.

LARGEST IMPORTERS



In 2019, Kangaroo leather and hide exports to Europe were 226 tonnes worth AUD 2.47 million, exported to Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Portugal⁸.

INDUSTRY ACTION

Brands banning kangaroo leather:

DIADORA
PRADA GROUP
SALVATORE FERRAGAMO
VERSACE

"We can confirm that there will be a complete stop to the use of kangaroo leather. I don't want to kill animals to make fashion. It doesn't feel right."

Donatella Versace, on announcing the decision



Replace

Only by banning the use of kangaroo skin can brands successfully help to protect and safeguard the welfare of these animals. Replace kangaroo leather with a humane alternative such as Piñatex made using pineapple leaves⁹, or with leather made from apples¹⁰, mushrooms¹¹, or coffee¹². Alternatively, evidence shows that the latest synthetic alternatives perform well in lightness, absorbency, and resistance to tearing, similar in quality to kangaroo leather¹³.



Be transparent

With consumers increasingly demanding transparency¹⁴, 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

- There is a significant gap between the intended welfare standards of the Australian code of practice governing the kangaroo industry, and welfare outcomes for both adult and dependent kangaroos¹⁵.
- Australian regulations require that kangaroos be killed with a head shot causing immediate unconsciousness and rapid death¹⁶. But, as kangaroos are often nocturnal, hunting occurs at night, in remote areas with virtually no monitoring¹⁷, leading to non-lethal shots that can cause horrific injuries and a slow death if the animals escape¹⁸.
- Data obtained from processed carcasses shows that between 4% and 40% of kangaroos that are commercially killed are not shot in the brain, but in the neck or body. This doesn't include animals that are injured but escape, and often endure a long, painful death¹⁹.
- If females are killed, dependent joeys experience a violent death, or they are left in the field to suffer exposure, starvation, or predation²⁰.
- As almost all female kangaroos have one or two dependent young, it's estimated that, in 2019 alone, based on the number of female kangaroos shot, 100,000 to 200,000 joeys were left to die²¹ or were killed by smashing the joey's head against a vehicle²² or by a similar blunt force.



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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 tanning²³ which produces a highly toxic mix of chemicals and gases, including the carcinogenic chromium (IV)²⁴. 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 waterways²⁵, with disastrous impacts.

As native Australian animals, kangaroos play a unique and valuable role in the Australian landscape, particularly regarding the regeneration of native plants²⁶.

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 cancer²⁷, respiratory²⁸, skin, and eye problems²⁹. 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.

There are also safety concerns regarding human consumption of kangaroo meat in countries such as France, Germany, and Italy due to the risk of contamination with *Salmonella* and *E. coli*, the use of lactic or acetic acid to treat kangaroo meat, and the presence of lead from the bullets used to kill the animals³⁰.

In addition, the majority of human infectious diseases originate from animals, and ongoing disease transmission from animals to people presents a significant global health burden. Kangaroo shooting amplifies the risk of animal-to-human spillover of viruses³¹.

FOUR PAWS calls on fashion companies to stop using kangaroo 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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