

# ANIMAL USE IN FASHION

FOUR PAWS has looked at the latest figures and estimates that over **five billion** animals, sentient beings able to feel both pain and joy, are being used for fashion every year, including:

- 3.4 billion ducks and geese slaughtered annually in the production of down and feathers<sup>1,2</sup>
- 777 million bovines, sheep and lambs, and goats and kids slaughtered annually in the production of meat and domesticated leather<sup>3</sup>
- 672 million animals in the production of fine wools such as merino, cashmere, alpaca, and mohair<sup>4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13</sup>
- 107 million animals still slaughtered for their fur, despite a rapidly declining fur industry<sup>14,15,16,17,18,19</sup>
- 3 million animals slaughtered annually by the exotic leathers industry<sup>20,21,22</sup>

Despite the growing number of viable alternatives to animal-derived materials coming onto the market, a large portion of fashion brands continue to use animal-derived materials, with most brands failing to apply any measures to ensure their welfare. For example, just 2.66% of the world's supply of wool and 4.1% of the world's down and feathers are certified to an animal welfare standard<sup>23,24</sup>. While we have seen fashion brands increasingly own their contribution to the world's environmental and social problems, recognising fashion's direct links to animal suffering has been far less prominent.

**The fashion industry's use of animal-derived materials is contributing to the global climate emergency. But with actions to reduce and replace the use of animal-derived materials, fashion brands can be a force for good.**

With no change to the current rates of animal agriculture, direct agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from livestock (which currently account for at least 16.5% of total GHGs<sup>25</sup>) are projected to grow by 4% until 2030, with livestock accounting for more than 80% of this global increase<sup>26</sup>. Given the sheer volume of animals used in fashion each year, as outlined below, the actions by individual brands to reduce and replace their use of animal-derived materials plays no small role in the global efforts to redirect our environmental future.

After all, the use of animal-derived materials has direct links to the environmental and social costs of the global fashion industry – from the ecological footprint that farming animals requires; to the lack of action from policymakers or economic pressures faced by producers that often lead to poor animal welfare standards and/or cruel practices (e.g. mulesing in wool production and live plucking in down and feather production); and the human health risks associated with intense farming conditions (e.g. fur farms and COVID-19).

## Breakdown: the number of animals used in fashion

Category		Number of animals (per year)	Proportion of global production certified in 2020/21 <sup>a</sup>
Wool	Sheep	633,000,000	2.66%
	Mohair	1,444,500	27%
	Cashmere	33,680,000	7%
	Alpaca	4,367,816	<1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>672,492,316</b>	
Down and feather	Ducks	2,774,461,400	
	Geese	687,850,500	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,462,311,900</b>	<b>4.1%<sup>b</sup></b>
Leather (domesticated)	Bovines	202,206,018	
	Sheep and lambs	312,422,518	
	Goats and kids	262,404,231	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>777,032,767</b>	
Exotic leather	Crocodiles, alligators	1,492,332	
	Ostrich	1,164,500	
	NB: ostrich is used to produce leather and for its feathers		
	Pythons	708,000	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,364,832</b>	
Fur	Foxes	12,000,000	
	Mink	22,000,000	
	Raccoon dogs	9,300,000	
	Rabbit	57,212,000	
	Karakul	296,102	
	Cats and dogs	2,000,000	
	Seals	586,000	
	Fur trapping	3,753,955	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>107,148,057</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>5,022,322,872</b>	



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NB: The number of animals used in fashion are likely to be even more than the figure stated above due to considerations such as a lack of reporting or unavailability of actual production numbers from key producer countries. Figures for angora rabbits have also been left out due to the unavailability of recent data.

<sup>a</sup> Figures for the proportion of global production certified in 2020/21 were obtained from the Preferred Fiber & Materials Market Report 2021 by Textile Exchange and the IWTO market information ed. 17 report by the International Wool Textile Organisation. Both sources are already fully referenced in the text on the first page (numbers [23](#) and [24](#) on the References page).

<sup>b</sup> We were unable to determine the breakdown of certified down coming from ducks versus geese due to a lack of available data.

**We need fewer animals farmed and hunted, and more protection provided to species which continue to be used.**

FOUR PAWS believes animal welfare certification can play an important role in fashion, as they help to enable higher levels of traceability for virgin animal-derived materials in comparison to uncertified animal-derived materials and are a practical way for brands to verify their animal welfare claims to their concerned customers. But despite the large numbers of animals that potentially end up in fashion supply chains each year, very little proportions of animal-derived materials are certified to animal welfare standards<sup>27</sup>.

Furthermore, animal production and consumption can be attributed to a wide variety of adverse environmental impacts, including GHGs, land use and degradation, water scarcity and nutrient pollution (e.g. acidification and eutrophication). In fact, GHGs, land degradation and water use have

large-scale environmental consequences such as the greater propensity for natural disasters, habitat and biodiversity loss, and freshwater scarcity – all of which exacerbate our climate crisis<sup>28</sup>. Together with the unsustainable consumption rates of animal-derived fashion products and the plethora of animal welfare risks associated with the intensity of commercial farming systems to keep up with such demand, there is a clear need for systems change across the livestock and global fashion sectors.

That is why FOUR PAWS supports the [50by40](#) initiative which calls for a 50% reduction in the global production and consumption of farmed animal products by 2040. FOUR PAWS also encourages fashion brands to make a time-bound commitment to refine, reduce and replace their use of animal-derived materials with sustainable and kinder alternatives to augment this global goal. To support fashion brands with this transition, more information and resources are available via the [FOUR PAWS industry page](#).



## References

- 1 Based on average figures from UN FAO between 2016-2020. While there is no reliable data available on how much of the global feather production goes specifically to apparel versus bedding and other segments, FOUR PAWS has made a conservative assumption that at least 10% of the animals end up directly in fashion supply chains and reflective of [market estimates](#).
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