

CHLOÉ

The luxury fashion sector has long been known for the extensive use of both domesticated and wild animal-derived materials. But can luxury brands adapt and evolve alongside customer expectations for animal welfare, while staying relevant for future generations who are increasingly becoming conscious consumers?

In this article, we delve into Chloé's experience with managing organisational change and rethinking design in a new era of sustainability and social responsibility for the luxury brand, while respecting its own history and underlying philosophy.

We are joined by Aude Vergne, the Chief Sustainability Officer at Chloé to talk about the animal welfare commitments they have made as part of the brand's wider sustainability strategy.

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— CHLOÉ

FOUR PAWS: In 2018, Chloé banned fur from its collections. This was followed by a ban on the use of exotic skins a year later. As a luxury fashion brand, why is it important to Chloé to take an active stance on the use of these materials in the fashion industry?

Chloé: Chloé's creative stance has always been to work with a wide range of natural materials, with the intention to highlight the story and inherent beauty they carry.

This range is actually so wide we realised there were enough meaningful materials for us to use without resorting [to] furs and exotic animal skins, the use of which we had already significantly reduced before the ban.

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FP: Luxury fashion brands are renowned for their strong sense of identity, and decorated histories in the art of fashion. On your website you say, 'everything starts on the design table'. Was there a cultural shift needed in Chloé's approach to design which came with the decision to ban the use of animal materials like angora, fur, and exotic skins? And if so, how have you begun to enact such a shift?

C: The shift for Chloé was a natural one, as prior to the official ban we had already significantly reduced our use of furs and exotic animal skins.

This was due to a subtle rather than abrupt internal change, thanks to the personal commitments of many of our employees and to their sensitivity to a societal cultural shift regarding animal welfare.

As a result, these products were not a significant part of our business anymore, making the choice to ban them even easier.



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FP: What have been the biggest challenges for Chloé in upholding its commitment to animal welfare, and what key opportunities or experiences have helped the brand to meet these challenges?

C: One of the main challenges we face in moving forward with animal welfare is traceability.

The fashion industry's supply chains are organised in such a way that many suppliers are involved in the making of a given product.

This makes it difficult to have visibility all the way to the crop, which is necessary to implement and monitor practices improving animal welfare.

For this reason, we are working on different traceability projects at Chloé and Richemont (by which Chloé is owned) and have taken the following commitments:

- Starting from April 2022, our brand Chloé will be sourcing 100% of its bovine hides and leathers from Europe and Mediterranean rim countries to improve transparency on this material sourcing and be able to eventually better monitor animal welfare in these supply chains.
- By 2025, all the wool used by Chloé will either be certified RWS or be recycled.

We are also raising awareness of animal welfare among our suppliers by including animal welfare criteria in our new version of the Richemont Supplier Code of Conduct which Chloé suppliers must read and sign.

FP: It has been evident in the last few years especially that a new era of sustainability and social responsibility has dawned on Chloé. As a company that is responding to the challenges of its time, what is one piece of advice you wish you had been given, that you are able to give now, to any other fashion brand or designer out there who is aiming to carve a similar path?

C: The first step for Chloé has been to measure our impacts to identify where we were having the most negative impacts and what part of business this was due to, bearing in mind that many stakes are interconnected.

From there, we have been able to define our short- and long-term objectives and start communicating them to our stakeholders through our Sustainability strategy.

Then, transparency with our staff about our sustainability strategy and training were key to making a real difference.

If we could give one piece of advice to companies that wish to go through the same path, it would be to always consider social and environmental issues as interconnected at every stage of their journey.

For more information on developing an animal welfare policy, please refer to the [FOUR PAWS Policy Guidelines for Fashion Brands and Retailers](#).

ANIMAL WELFARE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Did you know that by developing an animal welfare policy, brands can further contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

This is because animal welfare is linked to addressing zero hunger (Goal 2), good health and wellbeing (Goal 3), clean water (Goal 6), livelihood (Goal 8), climate change (Goal 13), and biodiversity loss (Goals 14 and 15).^{1,2}

In other words, the practices which undermine the wellbeing of animals have adverse impacts on humans and our environment too.

Wildlife trade and use, habitat destruction, and intensive farming systems all contribute to the emergence of infectious disease.³

For instance, we need only look to the fur farms since COVID-19 began, where stressed and weakened animals crammed closely together have provided the ideal breeding ground for major outbreaks, posing a risk not only to the animals but the farm workers and local communities living near affected farms.⁴

Moreover, deforestation – driven largely by animal agriculture – is a major contributor to zoonotic disease spread.^{3,5}

By eradicating the use of wildlife products in fashion and rewarding better welfare systems, brands can reduce risk to animals, people, and the environment.

— FOUR PAWS

The FOUR PAWS Case Study series are designed to shine a spotlight on brands that have overcome particular challenges and to share their learnings with other brands. The inclusion of a brand as a case study subject does not mean FOUR PAWS endorses the overall performance of the brand in relation to animal welfare.

References

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