

## **How UK is centre for £7million trade in cat and dog fur**

By Isabel Oakeshott, Evening Standard Political Correspondent 31 August 2004

Cat and dog fur is being shipped into Britain on a record scale, it is revealed today. Figures obtained by the Evening Standard show a huge surge in imports of the pelts for sale to the fashion industry. Traders from Europe and the Far East ferried up to £7million worth into Britain last year.

London has become a major international trading centre for the furs, following bans in other countries.

The scale of the business emerged in Customs and Excise records released to an MP. The statistics are normally available only to those who pay a subscription to access an obscure government website.

More than £40million of fur-related items poured into Britain last year - almost double the amount of five years ago. Imports of clothes and fashion accessories made with real fur have tripled from £4 million to about £12million in the past decade.

As well as fur clothes, more than £6million of "raw" animal fur, and £22million of tanned or "dressed" fur, from 12 named species and "other animals", was shipped into Britain last year.

Most of the pelts were from minks, foxes, or rabbits - although more unusual species, such as sea otters, sea lions and beavers are also involved.

However, £1 million worth of fur came from "wild felines" - while 5.9 million fell into the " other " category. Experts say the majority of this is from domestic cats and dogs, since the 12 named categories cover almost everything else.

Andrew Butler, of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, said: "These figures are shocking. There is a huge international trade in cat and dog fur, much of it coming from backyard suppliers in the Far East who are totally unregulated.

"The cruelty is massive. Many animals are taken from the streets and butchered using appallingly inhumane methods."

Although America, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Greece and Australia have banned all cat and dog fur imports, there are no such restrictions in Britain.

The majority of cat and dog fur arriving here comes from China, where two million animals a year are slaughtered for the trade.

MEP Struan Stevenson, who has campaigned for an EU-wide ban, said: "As dealers are forced out of other countries, they are coming here. The only way to stop this evil trade is to ban it throughout the EU."

Most of the pelts are only in Britain temporarily and then shipped to other countries. Although some cats and dogs are from fur farms, bred for their pelts, many are strays.

Undercover investigators from animal rights organisations have filmed backstreet operators in China and the Philippines rounding up cats, cramming them into tiny cages, and killing them using barbaric methods.

The figures - released at the request of Labour MP Lynne Jones - show the fur trade has undergone a dramatic revival. After a slump, which saw the overall value of fur imports to Britain drop to little over 26million in 1999, imports climbed to £40.8million worth last year.

While the majority of British designers and models shunned real fur in the Nineties, many now appear to regard it as acceptable.

Last week, it emerged that Cindy Crawford - who once posed for the "I'd rather go naked than wear fur" campaign - has become a model for mink coat firm Blackglama.

Paul Littlefair of the RSPCA said: "We are very disturbed to see a general increase in the reappearance of all types of fur.

"This trend has created a market for whole garments as well as fur trim, toys and other novelties. Countries in east Asia have only recently begun producing dog and cat fur to meet demand.

"Most animals reared for fur in China and elsewhere are kept in extremely poor accommodation, and generally not slaughtered humanely."

The Department of Trade and Industry has not ruled out banning imports of fur from domestic cats and dogs, but fears new laws would be very difficult to enforce.

A DTI spokesman said: "It is almost impossible to tell whether the fur comes from wild or domestic animals. Often the only way to be sure is DNA testing. We would like to see more hard evidence from animal rights groups."

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## **Fresh Calls For Ban On Pet Fur Trade**

The Scotsman May 2004

EURO MP Struan Stevenson has renewed calls for the European Commission to ban the sale of cat and dog fur in light of a ruling in Australia where the government has outlawed the trade.

During a visit to Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home yesterday, Mr Stevenson said that with Australia and the United States no longer accepting fur, Europe will be targeted.

He said: "Despite parliamentary process and securing the support of the majority of the European Parliament, the Brussels bureaucrats still flaunt the rules by refusing to bring in to force legislation outlawing this barbaric practice."

He added: "It pains me to think of the millions of domestic animals who are reared, rounded up and then mercilessly and brutally butchered purely for their skins.

"Other parts of the world are making a stance and banning cat and dog skins from their markets. I am urging the European Commission to do likewise and bring an immediate halt to the unnecessary suffering of the animals we refer to as pets."