

California becomes first US state to ban animal fur products

California will become the first US state to ban the sale and manufacture of new fur products and the third to bar most animals from circus performances under a pair of bills signed on Saturday by the governor, Gavin Newsom.

The law will bar residents from selling or making clothing, shoes or handbags with fur, starting in 2023. Animal rights groups cheered the measure as a stand against inhumane practices.

However the proposal was vigorously opposed by the billion-dollar US fur industry, while the Fur Information Council of America has already threatened to sue¹.

"California is a leader when it comes to animal welfare², and today that leadership includes banning the sale of fur," Newsom said. "But we are doing more than that. We are making a statement to the world that beautiful wild animals like bears and tigers have no place on trapeze wires or jumping through flames."

It could mark a significant blow to the fur industry that makes products from animals including mink, chinchillas, rabbits and other animals. The US retail fur industry brought in \$1.5bn in sales in 2014, the most recent data available from the Fur Information Council.

Under the California law, there is a fine of up to \$1,000 for multiple violations. Fashion designers including Versace, Gucci and Giorgio Armani have stopped or say they plan to stop using fur.

Animal rights groups have said animals may be subject to gassing, electrocution and other inhumane actions to take their fur. Advocacy group Direct Action Everywhere said "Ordinary people want to see animals protected, not abused."

Opponents of the legislation have said it could create a black market and be a slippery slope to bans on other products. The ban is part of a "radical vegan agenda³ using fur as the first step to other bans on what we wear and eat", Keith Kaplan of the Fur Information Council said in a prior statement. He claimed fake fur was not a renewable or sustainable option.

California joins New Jersey and Hawaii in banning most animals from circus performances. The law exempts domesticated dogs, cats and horses and does not apply to rodeos.

Circuses have been declining in popularity for decades. The most well-known act, the Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus, closed in 2017 after 146 years of performances.

At least 18 circuses do not use animals, including Cirque du Soleil.

The law includes penalties of up to \$25,000 per day for each violation.

The Southwest California Legislative Council opposed the law, saying it would prevent people from being able "to experience the thrill of a circus performance featuring beautiful, well-cared-for animals".

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals lauded both new laws. "Today is a historic day for animals in California, including those who have been whipped⁴ into performing in circuses, or skinned alive for their fur or skin," said its vice-president, Tracy Reiman;

Adapted from *The Guardian*, October 13th, 2019

¹ to sue: faire un procès

² welfare: bien être

³ agenda: projet

⁴ whipped: fouettés