

ENVIRONMENT

Far from being environmentally friendly leather is a treated hazardous chemical concoction. Were it not treated, your car seats, lounge suite, shoes and coats would rot underneath you as any dead skin does. Untreated toxic chemicals used in tanning run into waterways and into water supplies. Air pollution is also badly effected by tanneries burning residuals (hair etc). Tanneries consume massive levels of water. The film "Hell For Leather" (2008) exposes toxicity from the 100 tanneries in the **Hazaribagh** area of **Dhaka** being comparable with Chernobyl's toxicity levels. National Geographic says "modern leather shoemaking processes damage the environment – your shoe left a toxic footprint in its country of origin." Leather is also an energy-intensive industry. **Karachi, Pakistan** has been described as a brown toxic wasteland laced with arsenic and chromium percolating, bubbling and spitting its way into the ocean. Some workers tan the hides with caustic chemicals, other stand and work barefoot in the waste without any protective equipment. **Tamil Nadu, India** has been devastated by leather tanneries.

HUMAN HEALTH

Finished leather has been processed by using toxins including cyanide-based oils (cyanide causes heart and brain damage), chrome (chromium causes lung cancer, ulcers, holes in the nasal septum) arsenic (deadly poison leading to lung cancer and death), lead (high levels can cause death and formaldehyde (a probable human carcinogen). Workers and residents in areas that have tanneries often have high levels of cancers including leukemia and diseases like cholera caused by contamination. Colombian leather tanning industry workers are paid low wages and work long hours and many of its workers are children as young as 5. Child workers in the leather industry are exposed to numerous health hazards. Among those already listed are burns, intoxication, fumigation, injuries, fractures and amputations (some lose their hands and fingers working with machines), and vision impairment. It was Japanese workers hundreds of years ago called Burkumin who worked in this field and they were society's outcasts. In India it is often The Untouchables doing this work. Leather production in the U.S. is a multi billion dollar industry. Ethiopia, Mexico, China, Brazil, India, Pakistan and Germany are also high producers of leather.

**** PVC (polyVINYL chloride) is also toxic for animals, the environment and human health. Production requires noxious chemicals, in landfills their carcinogens are released through air currents that effect all animals; their toxic ash must be treated as hazardous waste. Whales are one example of animals that have high levels of dioxin and chemicals in their bodies from this waste. Dioxin is one of the most toxic chemicals known to humankind and causes cancer, nerve damage, birth defects and endometriosis. Look to shoes and bags made from canvas, recycled rubber, synthetic Ultrasuede, organic cotton and hemp.**

Need another good reason to be vegan? – dioxins enter the general population almost exclusively from ingestion of, specifically, consumption of eggs, fish, meat and dairy products.



THE TRUTH ABOUT LEATHER

The leather industry is cruel and toxic for animals, the environment and human health

Leather is sometimes but not always a byproduct of the meat industry. It falls into two categories – "farmed" and "exotic." Farmed animals in intensive systems endure unrelenting suffering. Whether leather is a by-product or purpose grown there is a litany of physical mutilation and behavioral deprivation.

Animals whose skins are made into leather include: cattle including Slink (unborn calves), sheep, goats, pigs (including Peccary – wild pig from Central and South America), elephants, seal, ostrich, frogs, shark, fish, camels, cats, dogs, lizards, snakes, eel (known as Silk Of The Ocean), dolphins, kangaroos, cane toads, horses, stingray (Shagreen), sea turtles (neck and flippers), zebras, mules, donkeys, possum, alligator, crocodile, buffalo (bison), deer, elk, wallaby, walrus, emu and chicken.

They are skinned for boots, coats, wallets, handbags, watchbands, belts, book bindings, gloves, car seat covers, motorcycle gear, luggage, briefcases, pen and key holders, gun bags, gripper golf gloves, cricket balls, soft/baseballs, basketballs, whips, saddles, moccasins, footballs, boxing gloves, lounge suites, dog and cat collars, dog leads and chew toys, golf bags, archery quivers, rifle slings, rifle slings and scabbards, gun holsters, knife sheaths, shell carriers, baby shoes (can be made of cat skin from the Philippines and deerskin), cigar cases, drum heads and orthopedic products. * Items made of composite leather often contain animal skin. Buckskin (otherwise known as brained leather) is the tanning process using animals' brains or other fatty materials to soften the leather and make it washable. Chamois is one example.

CATTLE

In Australia cattle are mutilated - castrated, branded, dehorned without anesthesia and in some states their tails are docked. They are transported long distances and then slaughtered. Much of the world's cow leather comes from India. India has a duplicitous attitude toward cattle – it is incorrectly believed that cattle are collectively revered. Hindus are forbidden to slaughter cows giving milk but they can use the hide of one that dies of natural causes. Muslims are not permitted to skin animals that have died naturally. There are an estimated 3,600 legal and 30,000 illegal cattle abattoirs in India. It is not uncommon for cattle to have their legs broken or be poisoned so they can be declared fit for slaughter as it is illegal to kill healthy young cattle. Much has been documented about atrocities that take place in Indian tanneries

particularly by PETA and the film "Earthlings". Weak, sickly and oftentimes injured animals are dragged by ropes or have hot substances (tobacco, salt or hot sauce) rubbed in their eyes to make them continue grueling walks. They are crammed 50 per truck into a size meant to hold no more than 12 animals. Because stunning methods are ad hoc they can also be skinned alive. When dairy cows here are used up in commercial farms their skins are used for leather and the skin of veal calves is prized for its softness.



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THE TRUTH ABOUT LEATHER

GOATS

NSW Agriculture Dpt. (Janet Healey ISSN 0725-7759) describes "In Australia goat skins are simply a by product from the slaughter of goats for meat - leather from young, healthy non-Angora goats typically combines strength with lightness.....however the smallness of these skins is a disadvantage. **Feral goats** – skins of all types usually showing the effects of transport stress and injury. **Cashmere Goats** – originated in the feral goat population – when sent to slaughter they are usually in reasonable body fat condition and free of disease. **Boer goats** – excessive fat can produce, after tannage, an adverse condition called 'double hiding.' **Angora goats** – 'well husbanded.' **Milch goats** – small but productive group of well husbanded animals. They are usually slaughtered either as kids or when they are aged and unsound.

RABBITS

In Australia there is an antipodal attitude toward many species including rabbits. On the one hand there are more and more poisons to eradicate rabbits. On the other the intensive 'farming' of rabbits is rapidly increasing. We are aware of the cruelty of 'battery hen' cages and now it has been found to be profitable to also cram rabbits into small cages.* Landline (2006) – rabbit farmer Steve Keiry "what we basically need is a very dry skin and a skin with a limited amount of fat on the skin. With farmed rabbits, they are a lot fatter than what you get from a wild rabbit. We can't process those skins in our machines. It's just – the fat gets caught up in our machines and it just makes it a very difficult process."

STINGRAYS, FISH

An Australian website offers Parrot Fish skin caps (popular with the fishing and hunting fraternity), handbags and wallets, stingray gold nib pens, wallets and purses. Consumers of these "luxury" items should know that inhabitants of the sea suffer pain as we do, whether hooked through their mouths (fish have 58 such receptors around the mouth and react at lower levels of pain than humans) or netted, either way they suffocate to death.



EMUS & OSTRICHES

Both are large swift moving birds that in the wild roam considerable distances. They are now being confined and their behaviors restricted. The transportation and slaughter of these wild birds is very stressful, "the duration of all journeys should be as short as possible, as transport can be a stressful experience" W.A. Codes of practice permit the cutting of the ends of all 3 toes of emus with a hot blade machine designed to debeak chicks – this is done to prevent humans being scratched during handling and to prevent scratching to other birds during transport and displays of aggression. *Dr. Mike Paton – Senior Vet Office, Dpt. Agriculture confirmed (2007) this is still acceptable under the Code.

ALLIGATORS & CROCODILES

Alligator and Crocodile skins come predominately from factory farms with about 85% of all alligator skins coming from U.S. Louisiana. "Raising alligators isn't much different from being a chicken farmer," says Ruth Elsey, a wildlife biologist at the state-administered Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana. When you consider conditions for chickens it won't surprise you to learn that alligators are kept tightly packed in a filthy environment. The recommended form of slaughter is hammer, chisels and axes repeatedly pounded into the alligators' spines (nape-stab) to preserve their skin, the animal can take up to 2 hours to die. Repeatedly bludgeoning and knifing also occurs. 25-30% of crocodile products come from endangered species. They are farmed in Australia on the one hand and protected on the other. On farms in Australia, Israel, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Mozambique and the U.S. they exist on concrete, they cannot experience any natural behavior. Crocodile mothers are incredibly nurturing and protective of their young but eggs are removed from her at "farms" before she can begin to experience this rudimentary need. Crocodiles are extremely susceptible to stress and can become paralyzed or develop Septicemia particularly in "farm" locations.

At least 13 charities are currently offering online products made from "cruelty-free leather" (from naturally deceased cattle) – it would appear there is an unprecedented amount of cattle keeling over in Rajasthan.

The other casualties in leather industries are the environment and human health.

KANGAROOS

The biggest land kill of any species in the world. This slaughter is not monitored. There is no-one overseeing the killing of kangaroos at night in the vast tracts of Australia but we have all seen footage of kangaroos being hauled up onto trucks by a hook in the leg, some still struggling for life. We have seen footage of joeys having their heads slammed into the sides of vehicles. Even the "cleanest" shot will cause suffering to other members of the mob, not least of all to the 'collateral' of this industry, the joeys - currently in the Kangaroo Management Plan there is nothing in the code about joeys at foot being "dealt with" - when their parents are killed, they are left to starve to death, they have no protection at all. Not surprisingly David Beckham dumped his Adidas kangaroo-leather football boots in favour of synthetic ones.

SNAKES & LIZARD

Snakes and Lizards are often skinned alive as it is believed this increases the suppleness of the leather – it may take the animal up to 4 days to die. It has been reported that pythons are captured from the wild, stunned, a hose pipe forced between their jaws and water forced through the animal until it swells up like a balloon thus making skinning easier. Or they are nailed to a tree and skinned alive.

