

Birds Suffer Horribly for Pillows & Coats

Down, the soft breast feathers of live birds, is mixed with slaughterhouse feathers from ducks and geese to fill pillows and coverlets at many hotels and in the making of some designer outerwear. The feathers originate on industrial farms where they are ripped from the bodies of live geese, leaving them bleeding in excruciating pain. Other feathers are byproducts of the foie gras industry, in which ducks and geese are force fed with metal tubes to create diseased livers for gourmet appetizers.

Investigator Marcus Mueller tracks the Hungarian plucking brigades – men and women who go from farm to farm stripping feathers from live geese. There are plucking brigades in Poland, Russia and Moldova, but Hungary is the largest source of live-plucked feathers and down. Birds are stripped every five weeks and their bleeding wounds are roughly sewn up with a needle and thread before they are slaughtered at 6 months old. Says Mueller:



Photo by Four Paws/Farmwatch

“The men and women from the brigades work without feeling, grabbing terrified geese by their wings or legs, sometimes breaking them, always hurting them, as they tear out the birds’ feathers.”

Manufacturers and retailers who say they don’t use down from live-plucked birds cannot prove their claim.

Mueller explains: “Brigades go from farm to farm stripping the birds as they go, then the feathers are sold to brokers and middlemen who mix live-plucked feathers with those recovered from slaughtered animals.”

Birds who are not plucked alive but whose feathers are included in pillows, comforters and clothing are confined in filthy, disease-ridden buildings the same as the live-plucked birds. Feathers from slaughtered chickens are stuffed in pillows and coats along with feathers from more than 2 billion slaughterhouse ducks each year.



Photo by Society for the Advancement of Animal Wellbeing

What Should I Do?

Please don't EVER buy a coat, jacket, comforter, pillow or any other clothing, bedding or household product filled or decorated with feathers/down, fur or fleece. Read labels. If down/feathers or other animal products are involved, skip the purchase and choose an item made of all-“manmade” materials. Inform the store's customer service department how down/feather products originate and why you refuse to buy them. Politely hand them this pamphlet.

When making hotel reservations, arrange in advance to have only polyester-filled pillows and coverlets in your room when you arrive. Explain that you want this guarantee the same as no smoking. When you

get to the front desk on arrival, reiterate your request for feather-free pillows, and when you get to your room, examine the pillows! Remove the pillow slips until you get to the pillow and READ THE TAG. It will say if the pillow filler is down/feathers or polyester. If down/feather pillows are in your room, call the front desk and ask that they be removed immediately and replaced with feather-free pillows. Inform the hotel that you are ALLERGIC TO ANIMAL ABUSE and that their “pillow policy” will influence your future hotel choices. Politely hand them this pamphlet.

Educate your family and friends and look for opportunities to write letters to the editor & participate in media forums about the cruelty of down/feather products. No one who learns the truth will choose to wear a coat made of cruelty or to sleep on a pillow of pain.

United Poultry Concerns is a nonprofit organization that promotes the compassionate and respectful treatment of domestic fowl. To learn more about how you can help millions of birds, please visit or write to:



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