

Vegan Education in Schools

Ethics course

Years 7 to 12

Lesson 9: The leather, fur, and wool industries: exposing the truth behind animal-derived materials

Overview:

This lesson pulls back the curtain on the brutal reality behind leather, fur, and wool - industries that are too often sanitised by terms like “by-product,” “natural,” or “humane.” Students will critically analyse how these materials are not mere leftovers but co-products that actively sustain animal exploitation. They will engage with abolitionist vegan ethics, confronting the economic, environmental, and moral costs of turning sentient beings into fashion.

Objectives:

- To expose the systemic violence and commodification behind leather, wool, and fur
- To debunk the by-product myth and reveal how these industries profit from suffering
- To examine how speciesism is embedded in the fashion industry
- To promote veganism as the ethical response to animal exploitation
- To empower students with the tools to act justly and uphold fairness for all beings

Outcomes:

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand that leather, wool, and fur are products of direct exploitation
- Recognise how these industries are falsely presented as ethical or sustainable
- Use evidence to dismantle the “by-product” narrative
- Reflect on the ethical implications of wearing animal materials
- Clearly articulate an abolitionist vegan position through writing or discussion

Materials:

- Projector and speakers
- Whiteboard and markers
- Internet-enabled smartboard or student devices

- Handouts: myth vs fact worksheet, quote bank, writing scaffold
- Access to the following resources:

Leather:

- **Video:** "[Leather in Reverse](#)" – PETA (1:30)
- **Article:** "[The Leather Industry](#)" – PETA
- **Article:** "[Leather](#)" – Collective Fashion Justice
- **Article:** "[Leather Destroys](#)" – PETA

Wool:

- **Video:** "[PETA Asia's Latest Findings of Cruelty in the Australian Wool Industry](#)" (3:02)
- **Video:** "[Are Vegans WRONG About the Wool Industry?](#)" – Joey Carbstrong (8:02)
- **Article:** "[Shearing: What Do Vegan Sanctuaries Do With the Wool?](#)" – Surge Sanctuary

Fur:

- **Article:** "[The Truth About Fur](#)" – PETA UK
- **Video:** "[A Cruel Industry: The Reality of Fur Farming](#)" – Vegan FTA (1:32)
- **Video:** "[Fur: Never Humane](#)" – Animal Defenders International (1:44)

Lesson steps:

1. Introduction – Skins and lies (5 minutes)

- Ask: "What do you know about how leather, wool, or fur are made?"
- Create two columns: **Perception** vs **Reality**
- Frame the lesson: *"Today, we'll dismantle the comforting myths and face the truth about how animals are turned into fashion."*

2. Leather – The hidden cost (6 minutes)

- Play: "[Leather in Reverse](#)" – PETA
- Debrief:
 - Where does leather come from?
 - How is it connected to slaughter and climate destruction?

3. Debunking the by-product myth (6 minutes)

- Use: [“Leather”](#) – Collective Fashion Justice
- Key points:
 - Leather is a **co-product**, not a waste item
 - It boosts profit margins and sustains slaughterhouses
 - It’s marketed as “natural” while fuelling violence

4. Wool – Exploitation in disguise (15 minutes)

- Play: [PETA Asia’s Latest Findings of Cruelty in the Australian Wool Industry](#) and Joey Carbstrong’s [Are Vegans WRONG About the Wool Industry?](#)
- Discuss:
 - **Mulesing**, tail docking, live castration - often without anaesthetic
 - Breeding sheep for excessive wool causes heatstroke, infections, lameness
 - Shearing driven by speed → injuries, cuts, brutality
 - Compare to: “Shearing at Sanctuaries” – Surge Sanctuary
 - Wool is never sold, used for bedding or left for birds
 - No profit = no exploitation
- Ask:
 - What does true care look like?
 - If we can meet sheep’s needs without using them, what does that say about industry excuses?

5. Fur – Fashion built on torture (12 minutes)

- Present:
 - Article: [“The Truth About Fur”](#) – PETA UK
 - Videos:
 - [“A Cruel Industry: The Reality of Fur Farming”](#) – Vegan FTA
 - [“Fur: Never Humane”](#) – ADI

- Key points:
 - **Fur farms:** cages, insanity, anal electrocution, live skinning
 - **Trapping:** steel traps cause prolonged agony
 - **Greenwashing:** “eco fur” is a lie - it’s resource-intensive
 - While fur bans are spreading globally, the belief that animals are resources persists
- Discussion:
 - Why has fur become a moral line for many, while wool and leather haven’t?

6. Drawing the line – Myth vs truth debate (6 minutes)

- Write on board: *“Animal products are natural, necessary, and humane.”*
- Class debate/discussion:
 - Is “natural” a good enough reason to kill?
 - If we don’t need it, why are we still justifying it?
 - Can “humane” slaughter ever exist?

7. Exit reflection (4 minutes)

- Prompt: *“What will you never see the same way again?”*
- Option: students write in journals, share aloud, or create a 1-line classroom statement

Homework:

- Opinion piece (400–500 words):
“Why leather, fur, and wool are not by-products - they are direct exploitation.”
 - Include 2+ sources from the lesson
 - Use clear abolitionist framing

Extension Options:

- Create a campaign or zine: *“Justice Never Goes Out of Fashion”*
- Audit major brands’ claims of “ethical leather” or “humane wool”
- Research vegan alternatives: mushroom leather, bamboo fleece, bio-based fabrics

Differentiation:

- Provide transcripts and article summaries
- Allow video or oral journal submissions
- Support with sentence starters, glossary sheets
- Advanced task: Write a letter to a fashion label urging them to ditch animal products

Assessment Criteria:

- Demonstrates clear understanding of the systemic violence behind leather, wool, and fur
- Refutes industry myths with evidence
- Articulates an abolitionist vegan ethic with confidence and clarity
- Reflects thoughtfully in writing or discussion
- Participates in critical dialogue with ethical depth