**Case 16: Feathers and Furs**

One of the most highly debated topics in the marketing industry, is the treatment and use of animals in products. Kelly, a 15-year-old, has recently moved up north from a rural town to a private school due to her parents’ jobs. With a drastic change in her environment, she quickly notices how the majority of her schoolmates wear Canada Goose, a winter clothing brand famous for selling high-priced parkas with its signature red circular patch on the arms. Soon enough, Kelly finds herself wearing one as well. Yet, recently Kelly has come across footages and pictures on social media by advocates of animal ethics voicing their disapproval against the use of animals in product brands. One of the most prominent posts she has seen were the ones about Canada Goose. While she is horrified by what she has seen of the cruelty of animals, she is hesitant to give up her parka since it was bought at a high price, and wearing it gives her a sense of belonging to her new school. However, a classmate of Kelly, Marie, has recently seen Kelly’s parka and harshly criticized her for promoting an industry that creates profit at the expense of animals’ wellbeing and even lives.

Canada Goose’s winter parkas easily sell at around $1,000 each, marketing its products as protectors from “unspeakably cold conditions.” For a few years, the People’s Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has been releasing articles encasing photos and videos that reveal a gruesome process of the acquisition and use of wild animals for their high-priced products. The fur trimming on the hoods of the parkas are authentic coyote fur; wild coyotes that have been trapped in laxly regulated bear traps in which the animals may be left to fend for themselves for weeks. Regularly, cats and other animals will come across these traps as well. The photos from PETA show coyotes that have been shipped off to slaughterhouses where their furs are skinned off and their dead bodies are tossed aside. Their feathered counterparts, geese, are also a contributor to these high-priced products, providing the cocooning warmth of the coats that Canada Goose so highly values. Like the coyotes, the geese are acquired and suffer gruesome deaths. Trappers toss them into pens as the geese on the bottom of the pile are frequently suffocated to death. In the slaughterhouses, they’re kept in cages of limited space to the extent that they can barely even lift their heads, forming bruises on their already broken wings until their final moments arrive.

Canada Goose isn’t the only brand out there who uses animals to create their products. There are numerous other well known brands, and even less known companies that easily get away with similar processes of animal use. For example, PETA has also released evidence from undercovers showing Patagonia workers whipping and harshly shaving the wool of sheep, pregnant ones as well. Some people defend the use of animals for products saying that animals are unable to experience the same emotional processes as humans do and thus arguing that they can’t feel emotional and perhaps physical pain. Yet, is this just a valid excuse to utilize animals for the pleasure and satisfaction of human want?

**Study Questions:**

1. Is it ethical for someone, in this case Kelly, to justify an animal product because it brings her a sense of security in terms of social conventions?

2. Does the ethicality of animal use in products change depending on what the product is or how the animal is acquired and/or kept?

3. What kind of obligation, if any, should consumers have in knowing the process in which their products are created? Are consumers responsible for economically supporting animal-cruelty brands?

**Sources:**

<https://investigations.peta.org/geese-crushed-suffocated-at-former-canada-goose-down-supplier/> <https://www.peta.org/features/coyotes-killed-for-canada-goose/> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/12/animals-science-medical-pain/> <https://www.peta.org/blog/peta-responds-patagonias-lack-concern-new-sheep-cruelty-expose/>