

# Fact Sheet

## Raccoon Dogs and H.R. 891

### What is a raccoon dog?

- The raccoon dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*) is a member of the dog family—*Canidae* (canine)—and is native to eastern Siberia, northern China, North Vietnam, Korea, and Japan.
- “Raccoon dog” is the accepted common, English language name used by leading scientific authorities<sup>1</sup> to describe this animal, but some—including many in the fur industry—instead call the animal Asiatic raccoon, Finn raccoon, or tanuki, likely in a bid to obfuscate its canine heritage.
- Despite the first half of its name, the raccoon dog is unrelated to the raccoon, and is named for its fluffy fur and markings that resemble those of a raccoon.
- Raccoon dogs are raised for their fur predominantly in China, and to a much lesser extent, Finland.
- Although there are some wild populations of raccoon dogs in Europe and much of the former Soviet Union, these populations are a result of human introductions.

### Why would H.R. 891 ban the sale of raccoon dog fur?

- The Dog and Cat Fur Prohibition Enforcement Act would help enforce the current ban on dog and cat fur by enacting two related reforms: (1) require labeling of all fur-trimmed garments, many of which currently escape the federal labeling law if the value of the fur is \$150 or less; and (2) ban the sale of raccoon dog fur.
- Both measures are necessary to protect consumers from false advertising and mislabeling of fur garments, and to prevent domestic dog fur from being smuggled into this country.
- American consumers have been shocked by recent discoveries that this type of dog fur is coming into the U.S. at an alarming pace—much of which is mislabeled, unlabeled, or otherwise passed off as an entirely different species.
- Undercover video footage shows raccoon dogs killed for their fur in China, using gruesome methods, including skinning them alive.
- China has become the leading exporter of fur garments to the U.S. Estimates on the number of raccoon dogs killed for fur each year in China range from 1.5 million to 4 million.<sup>2</sup>
- The sale of raccoon dog fur violates the spirit, although not the letter, of the current ban on dog and cat fur enacted by the U.S. Congress in 2000.
- This Act would close the loophole that allows a type of dog fur to continue to be used widely in the fashion industry.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the taxonomical listing from the U.S. Department of Agriculture ([http://www.itis.usda.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?search\\_topic=TSN&search\\_value=183821](http://www.itis.usda.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?search_topic=TSN&search_value=183821)).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the reports “Fun Fur?” (<http://www.careforthewild.com/files/Furreport05.pdf>) and “Dying for Fur” ([http://www.animal-protection.net/furtrade/report\\_fur\\_china.pdf](http://www.animal-protection.net/furtrade/report_fur_china.pdf)).



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**The raccoon dog is a canine species, but so are the fox and coyote. Why should raccoon dogs be treated differently than other animals raised for fur?**

- Raccoon dogs deserves special attention because the animals are killed in such inhumane ways, and because this particular type of canine fur is being used to create widespread confusion and false advertising in the retail industry.
- The Humane Society of the United States recently subjected a sample of 25 fur-trimmed jackets from a variety of designers and retailers to mass spectrometry testing; all 25 garments were falsely advertised, falsely labeled, or not labeled at all.<sup>3</sup>
- Twenty of the 25 jackets sampled, or 80 percent, tested positive as raccoon dog fur. None of the 20 raccoon dog fur jackets properly identified the animal—one was simply unlabeled, and the rest were falsely labeled or falsely advertised as “faux fur” or another animal species such as raccoon, rabbit, or coyote.
- Even if the designers and retailers had used the correct name required by the Federal Trade Commission when identifying fur from the raccoon dog species (“Asiatic raccoon”) they would have been providing consumers with an outdated and not widely used term that does not give them important product information, instead likely leading them to believe they are purchasing raccoon fur.
- Because the raccoon dog has fur with markings that resemble those of a raccoon, it can be easily passed off as something it's not. HSUS investigators in China discovered that fur sellers will affix any label to a garment that a buyer requests, regardless of the true nature of the fur.
- The ban on raccoon dog is needed to ensure that domestic dog fur does not continue to flow into this country.

**Will a ban on the sale of raccoon dog fur be an unfair burden to producers?**

- Many designers and retailers have been so shocked by the recent investigation that they have voluntarily pledged to no longer use fur from raccoon dogs. These include DKNY, House of Deréon, Sean John, and Rocawear.
- Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger have pledged to phase out the use of real animal fur entirely, because they cannot have confidence in the integrity of fur products and cannot know whether they are really getting domestic dog or raccoon dog fur.
- Other corporations such as Burlington Coat Factory, Buffalo Exchange, Marc Ecko Enterprises, and Loehmann's have endorsed H.R. 891 because they believe raccoon dog fur should be banned.

**Will a ban on the sale of raccoon dog fur be the first step to banning the sale of other fur, such as mink or chinchilla?**

- Prohibiting commerce in raccoon dog fur will have no negative impact on other types of fur sales, and fur sellers will still have an abundance of species to use for fur, including fox, rabbit, coyote, mink, chinchilla, beaver, ermine, badger, raccoon, otter, bobcat, and many others.
- Current federal law already prohibits the sale of fur from domestic dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) and domestic cats (*Felis silvestris catus*), and H.R. 891 simply seeks to add a third species, the raccoon dog, to that list in order to prevent consumer deception and to aid in the enforcement of the existing ban on domestic dog fur.
- Raccoon dog fur is not substitutable for higher value fur such as mink or chinchilla. Yet, it is being fraudulently mislabeled as such, and likely displacing sales of mink and chinchilla as a result. H.R. 891 strengthens enforcement of the dog and cat fur ban and the fur labeling requirements to the benefit of sales in higher value fur that are not subject to trade restrictions.
- Because consumers don't realize what they are getting now due to the epidemic of false labeling and false advertising of raccoon dog fur, they will likely be satisfied with the actual species they thought they were getting.

For more information, contact The Humane Society of the United States at 202-452-1100 or [www.hsus.org/furfree](http://www.hsus.org/furfree).

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<sup>3</sup> A complete list of test results is available on The HSUS's web site (<http://www.hsus.org/web-files/PDF/Fur-Test-Results-Public-Factsheet-25-results-FINAL.pdf>).