

Letter to Donatella Versace

(The following letter, drafted by The Humane Society of the United States, was signed by the 12 American Idol finalists.)

Dear Donatella Versace:

I am writing to ask you to discontinue using real seal fur in your clothing designs. I recently learned about your use of seal fur and I am appealing to you to please learn more about the issue and why it is totally unacceptable.

For the past year, The Humane Society of the United States, the largest animal protection organization in the U.S., has been actively campaigning to end the brutal annual seal hunt in Canada. It is the largest commercial slaughter of marine mammals on the planet that will kill close to 1 million baby seals over the next three years. The Canadian government's own figures show that 96.6 percent of the reported 286,238 seals killed during the 2002-2003 hunt were between 12 days to 12 weeks old. These seals were beaten to death with a club or shot.

An alarming number of the seals are skinned while alive and conscious. Recently, an independent, international team of veterinarians observed the hunt, and examined the corpses of skinned seals. They found evidence that up to 40 percent of seals were skinned while still able to feel pain. An observer of this year's hunt watched as a baby seal that had been clubbed suddenly woke up in a pile of dead seals. Obviously suffering, the baby seal cried and cried for about 45 minutes - the observer appealed to the sealers to put her out of her misery but no one did.

I join millions of people who are appalled by the brutality and unsustainability of this pointless hunt. Even the Canadian government admits that the seals are not responsible for the region's crashing fish populations, which have been devastated by many years of industrial fishing. This is a commercial hunt for fur, pure and simple. You can learn more at protectseals.org. By using seal fur in your designs, you are endorsing the seal hunt. I simply can not wear Versace until I can be assured there is no seal fur in your collections.

Please join the Humane Society of the United States by ending your use of seal fur.