

Questioning Our Actions Towards Animals:
Animal-Related Ethical Dilemmas for Young People



Paying the Ultimate Price: The Inhumanity of Using Animals for Furs

Kylie pulled her coat closer around her body as she prepared herself for leaving the safety and warmth of the car. After saying goodbye to her mom, she hopped out, slammed the door before the snow could blow inside, and started toward the front door of the school. When it was sunny, it didn't seem like such a long walk, but today, with the snow falling quickly and heavily, it was a trek.

Running a bit late, she slipped quickly to her usual desk, right next to her best friend Hannah, who sent a small greeting of a smile. Kylie pulled off her jacket and put it around the back of her chair as she sat down. She leaned over to grab her notebook and a pencil from her bag, and it was then, as she raised her head, that she noticed the jacket on the back of Hannah's chair. Along the collar was a fringe of what appeared to be genuine rabbit fur.

She looked at her best friend, who was deeply engaged in the class discussion. Kylie didn't understand how someone as smart and well-informed as Hannah could be so oblivious to something like animal welfare, which seemed so natural to Kylie. But, she tried to put it out of her head until the end of class, when she knew Hannah would have some explanation such as, "Well, my grandma got it for me for Christmas and my other jacket's in the wash, so my mom made me wear it, even though I told her I'd never wear fur!"

But when class was over, and Hannah and Kylie finally met in the hall, Hannah didn't have an explanation like Kylie thought. Instead, as Hannah was hanging up her jacket, she turned to her friend.

"So, Kylie, I bought this jacket downtown yesterday. Do you like it?"

Kylie was speechless. She didn't want to hurt Hannah's feelings, but how could she say she liked the jacket? What should Kylie say that will stay true to her beliefs, but not hurt Hannah's feelings?



Kylie is in a bit of a pickle. She doesn't want to offend her best friend, but her inner voice tells her that Hannah's choice of fur is very wrong. Kylie needs to help her friend Hannah understand exactly what is keeping her warm this winter.

The MSPCA believes that there is no justification for killing animals solely for the purpose of producing fur garments and decorations, whether they are caught in the wild or bred in captivity.

It is possible that Hannah may be unaware that her new jacket has a genuine rabbit fur collar. Some imitations look so real that it is hard to tell what is fur and what is fake. Kylie might reinforce to Hannah that she is her best friend and that being honest is an important part of friendship. She might say that she likes the jacket but ask Hannah if she knows that the fringe is made of real animal fur. If Hannah is unsure, Kylie might suggest checking the label, which should list the components of the jacket.

If it is real fur, Kylie can tell Hannah that fur is one of the worst kinds of animal cruelty because it is using animals for the sake of fashion. Traps are an inhumane way of killing wild animals, and fur farms are particularly cruel ways to confine, breed, and kill fur-bearing animals. Both of these methods of fur acquisition cause immeasurable suffering for the animals. Today, there is no real need to wear fur. It is important for Kylie to point out that there are excellent quality fake furs, as well as soft and fluffy synthetic fabrics, that are available and mimic the comfort of fur that some desire. If Hannah wants, Kylie can offer to return to the store with her to request a refund or credit, explaining to the manager that Hannah would never knowingly buy real fur and that she disapproves of the fact that the store sells it.

If Hannah knew that the fringe was real, Kylie can gently tell her about the cruelties of trapping and fur farms, noting that in today's enlightened society, people generally frown on wearing something that came from such cruelties against animals. Hannah could still return the coat, or with her parents' permission, she could donate it to the homeless. She could free herself from the burden of knowing an animal was hurt just so she could look fashionable this winter.

Even if Hannah still wants to keep the coat, which is surely her choice, Kylie can still be proud of herself. She has made her case for not wearing fur and hopefully, Hannah will have learned something about the inhumanities of fur coats.