

Student activists gather at animal fur protest

by Karen Splawn
Staff Reporter

Several university students were among those participating in the Nov. 23 demonstration against a fur shop in the Flamingo Hilton.

The protest, sponsored by the local chapter of People for Ethical Treatment of Animals, was part of annual "Fur Free Friday," held the day after Thanksgiving, which is considered to be the biggest shopping day of the year.

Kristy Maughan, a business major, said she was protesting because fur is totally unnecessary. "[The animal's] skin is life-sustaining," she said.

Maughan, who described herself as an independent animal rights activist and a vegetarian, said people have the right to wear fur, but if they were educated they would probably change their minds.

Steen Borg, an accounting and finance major, said those who buy fur coats buy into pain and suffering.

"I never thought fur was right," he said.

Borg said that people are buying fewer fur coats.

Many of demonstrators held signs and chanted, "Fur is dead, fur is murder," while a video documentary produced by several animal rights groups, including PETA and the Humane Society,

showed graphic images of animals caught in steel-jaw traps, the main device fur trappers use to catch wild animals. The trap is banned in over 60 countries.

One demonstrator, dressed up like the Grim Reaper, carried a fox pelt caught in a steel-jaw trap.

Linda Levine, a member of PETA, said she and others challenged the hotel's executives to "follow in the footsteps" of casino chairman Steve Wynn, who has banned fur coats from being sold at either the Golden Nugget or The Mirage resort hotels.

Natalie Reinoso, an undeclared major, said that fur coats are disgusting.

"My mom used to wear fur," she said. "I used to look at her and laugh at how ridiculous she looked. It's good to make people feel stupid for wearing it."

The animal rights activists were not without opposition. Several men, wearing thick fur coats (and probably sweating, considering how warm it was that day) were standing near the demonstrators. One of them, Jack Clark, said he was wearing a coat because his friend's daughter was killed by a coyote. Another pointed out that many of the anti-fur demonstrators were wearing leather shoes.

"[The anti-fur demonstrators] should be worrying about people who can't eat and children who

are dying," said a man who identified himself as Danny.

Dave Stowater, a trapper, called the demonstrators unrealistic and said convicted killer Charles Manson supports PETA.

He added that trapping is actually good for the environment, because it helps to control animal populations.

"Banning trapping would hurt Nevada economically and spread disease among wildlife," Stowater said.

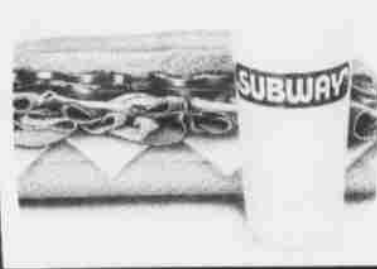
Other methods for catching animals, such as cages or poisoning, wouldn't be as effective, Stowater said.

A Flamingo executive also watched the demonstrators, although he kept his distance.

A woman working at Princess Furs, the store located in the Flamingo, said she wasn't allowed to comment about the demonstration or how sales were at the boutique.



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