

LAV KANGAROO AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Questions & Answers

□ **The kangaroo is the iconic animal of Australia. Why is it a victim of hunting?**

Kangaroos are culled in Australia because the relevant authorities, interested in promoting the wool industry, regard these herbivorous animals as a threat to grazing land for sheep reared for their wool.

This has created a paradox: a wild animal that has been living in Australia for about 30 million years, in perfect harmony with the local ecosystem and with a constantly declining population (currently about 50 million), is considered as a pest.

By contrast, the presence of and support to over 150 million sheep (originally imported by European settlers in the 17th century) raised for wool is considered as “normal”. This wool is also certified as responsibly sourced (Woolmark and Responsible Wool Standard logos).

□ **How did the kangaroo industry originate?**

The mass killing of kangaroos started in the late 17th century, with the settlement of Europeans in Australia. For centuries, kangaroos have merely been killed. Then, in the early 1950s, the trade of their meat and skins began.

Kangaroo meat was used originally for pets (cats and dogs) and then for human consumption, primarily for export, since Australians DO NOT generally eat it: their per capita consumption is 10 times lower than that of other meats – 0.3 kg/year/person as opposed to 37.2 kg/year/person of chicken and 34.1 kg/year/person of beef.

Kangaroo skins, too, are principally destined for export.

The kangaroo industry is thus based on the killing of wild animals, which are not hunted by tradition or to ensure the subsistence of aboriginal populations, but only as a further justification for their massacre, which has been going on for decades, to benefit the growth of another industry, the wool industry.

□ **How does kangaroo hunting take place?**

Kangaroo hunting is done “in secret”, in that it takes place under cover of darkness, i.e. from dusk to dawn (the kangaroo is predominantly nocturnal).

Specially licensed hunters point the headlights of their pick-up vehicles at the animals and shoot them.

Under Australian legislation (Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies), a kangaroo should be killed by a single shot to the head with a rifle. As is obvious, shooting at night, even at a distance of 100 m, causes in most cases horrendous injuries to the animals: jaws shattered; eyes blown out; animals with limb injuries being shot again; and those that escape enduring a slow and very painful death.

Often, female kangaroos are killed and their orphaned joeys (estimated at least at 700,000 per year) are the “collateral” damage of this slaughter.

Australian guidelines provide that orphaned in-pouch joeys should be euthanised by crushing the skull and destroying the brain, or stunned with a forceful blow to the head (even smashing their heads against the pick-up vehicle is permitted) and decapitated immediately afterwards.

□ **How many animals are killed in this slaughter?**

Kangaroo hunting is the largest slaughter of wildlife in the world, well above that of the more familiar seal hunting. In Australia, the number of kangaroos killed each year is equivalent to that of seals killed in Canada in one decade.

Based on official data, over 45 million kangaroos (an average of more than 2 million per year) have been killed in the past two decades.

This is in addition to the over 700,000 joeys considered as collateral victims, and to wounded adult kangaroos that escape to die a slow and agonising death and that are not recorded by official statistics.

□ **Is it a legal or illegal trade?**

Unfortunately, kangaroo hunting in Australia is legal; it is authorised by the Central Government and by State and Territory Governments, which define yearly culling quotas. Meat and skins are thus marketed on a regular basis and identified as kangaroo-derived products.

Australian legislation also permits the cruel killing of kangaroos both as part of commercial hunting (i.e. to harvest skins and meat for the market) and non-commercial hunting (e.g. under kangaroo management/eradication plans) and does not provide for particular penalties in the event of killing of mothers with their young.

□ **Kangaroo meat is unhealthy**

It is well known and widely documented that kangaroo meat may be very unhealthy. For instance, Russia, despite having a 70% share of Australian exports of this meat, has banned its import and trade a few years ago.

Kangaroos are killed in remote areas of Australia throughout the year (thus also in summer, with particularly high temperatures). They are eviscerated outdoors and their carcasses are hung and travel on pick-up vehicles for up to 10-12 hours before being stored in chillers (refrigerated containers placed in remote areas). This implies a high probability of contamination with pathogens (also because, during travel, the carcasses are covered by dust and dirt moved by the tyres of pick-up vehicles).

□ **What role does Italy play?**

In Europe, Italy is the main importer of kangaroo skins (with a 39% share of Australian exports of these skins). Kangaroo skins are used in the sportswear industry for soccer shoes and motorcycling suits, as well as for footwear and accessories in the high-end (luxury) market.

Kangaroo meat, at least in Italy, has not yet reached large retailing channels. However, some restaurants include it in their menus.

□ Which Italian companies are contributing to this slaughter?

Sportswear

- Soccer: LOTTO, PANTOFOLA D'ORO, and DANESE
- Motorcycling: DAINESE, DUCATI, GIMOTO, ALPINESTARS, and VIRCOS

Clothing

- VERSACE and SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

Footwear

- MORESCHI, MOMA, and FABI

Pet foods

- PROLIFE (just one type of dog food in its multi-taste moist food line).

□ Which companies have publicly announced that they will stop using kangaroo-derived products?

In Italy, at present, only Gucci (since 2017) has communicated its commitment to stop using kangaroo skins/furs.

Abroad, the US VF Corporation (owning over 20 global brands, e.g. The North Face, Timberland, Napapijri, Wrangler, Vans, etc.) has published a policy statement regarding its future non-use of kangaroo skins and other products of animal origin.

This shows that one may be a leader in one's own market segment (luxury items or sportswear) without using kangaroo skins.

□ What is LAV doing to save kangaroos?

In 2019, LAV joined an international network of NGOs engaged in saving kangaroos from this slaughter. In Italy,

- we screened *Kangaroo: a love-hate story* (<https://kangaroothemovie.com/>) in a cinema in Milan on 8 October. This is the first docufilm disclosing the "secret" kangaroo slaughter, with images that had not previously been seen (because kangaroo hunting takes place at night and in absolutely remote places);

- we announced our commitment to corporate managers attending a fashion industry sustainability seminar, organised in Milan on 1 October 2019, as part of *Salone della Responsabilità Sociale d'Impresa* (Corporate Social Responsibility exhibition and conference, Bocconi University); LAV was also the first animal protection association to participate in this type of events as a speaker;
- we prepared a bill to introduce a ban on the import and trade of kangaroo-derived products in Italy;
- we communicated the names of Italian companies using kangaroo skins and initiated a kangaroo awareness-building campaign focused on them.

□ **What can we do, as citizens and consumers, to discourage this business?**

To avoid contributing to this slaughter, LAV invites you:

- not to buy kangaroo-derived products or eat kangaroo meat (but in general not to buy any product of animal origin);
- contact companies using kangaroo skins or meat, asking them to divert their choices towards alternative solutions using materials of non-animal origin;
- continue to support LAV in this battle for civilisation, in which we will be engaged until obtaining a national and then EU ban on the import of products sourced from kangaroos.