

# Fur Real?

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If you turn on TV today, chances are a reality show will come on, and if not, then probably a prime time soap. Viewers love dramas like ‘Grey’s Anatomy,’ ‘Revenge,’ ‘Scandal,’ or ‘Gossip Girl.’ They’ve even rebooted the 1990s classic ‘Beverly Hills 90210.’ But the prime time serial starts and ends with ‘Dallas.’ TNT is now airing a continuation of the 1980s original series that started it all.

As a kid in the early 1980s, I remember turning the TV on every night and finding a prime time soap that focused on an extremely wealthy family. There were the Ewings on ‘Dallas’ and its spinoff, ‘Knots Landing,’ the Carringtons on ‘Dynasty,’ and the Gioberti and Channing families of ‘Falcon Crest.’

These families taught us what luxury was. They all lived in mansions, traveled on private jets, drove expensive cars, sported pricey jewelry and wore huge fur coats. And for Joan Collins’ Alexis Colby, sometimes she only wore a fur coat.

Fast forward 30 years, and mansions, jets, cars and jewelry are still popular status symbols. While fur coats are still a sign of money and power, they certainly aren’t revered as they once were. Because they are produced by the ritualistic raising and slaughtering of animals (of which many are adorable), fur coats are often met with scorn.

Kim Kardashian, a well-known fur wearer, was actually “flour-bombed” by an animal rights activist. While attending a benefit to launch her perfume last year, a woman walked up to Kardashian, yelled “Lousy fur hag!” and dumped flour on the reality star.

This subtext makes the Federal Trade Commission’s recent investigations into and subsequent charging of three retailers for false claims about the authenticity of their fur products so fascinating.

Thirty years ago, I would have assumed that the FTC’s investigation was in response to a complaint by Linda Evans’ Krystal Carrington that her mink fur coat contained fake fur. However, in 2013, the FTC charged the retailers for failing to disclose that products identified as having “faux” fur actually contained *real* fur.

The FTC charged upscale department store operator The Neiman Marcus Group Inc., DrJays.com Inc. and Eminent Inc., doing business as Revolve Clothing, for falsely identifying the faux fur and also for violating federal laws by not naming the animal that the fur came from. Neiman Marcus was also charged for falsely claiming that a rabbit fur product had mink fur, and for failing to disclose the fur country of origin for three fur products.

The retailers agreed to settle the charges with the FTC. Under the proposed settlement, the retailers would be prohibited from violating these laws for 20 years.

While views on fur coats may have changed over the last 30 years, they apparently always have been and always will be the center of drama.