



Last year's protest by anti-fur activists in Vaud did not resort to the Internet

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Animal rights militants expose fur coats on YouTube

by Marianne Burkhardt

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Animal rights militants are preparing for a busy winter as furs re-emerge from wardrobes. Campaigners as far away as the United States are scouring streets in search of fur-clad passers-by to film for an online competition launched by a group of activists in canton Vaud, LausAnimaliste, this month.

Lausanne-based animal rights group [LausAnimaliste](#) is taking the novel anti-fur campaign it devised in 2007 one step further. Last winter, other militant groups joined them on Vaud's busiest streets to draw attention to people wearing fur. The activists followed targets with placards bearing slogans such as "tortured animal skin." Arrows fixed onto the placards pointed accusingly towards offending garments.

Arrow-pointing action continues but this year, members of LausAnimaliste are inviting activists to film their targets and enter a video-clip competition. Entries will appear on YouTube and the group's own website before the winner is announced in April.

Tongue-in-cheek competition rules state that bonus points will be awarded for "unexpected spectacular events, celebrity appearances, police appearances, scuffles, etc."

LausAnimaliste member Fanny Vaucher told Swisster that the group decided to launch an international competition after a video of last year's campaign posted on YouTube provoked an enthusiastic response from animal rights activists everywhere, particularly in the United States.

"Campaigns were effective for decades but furs seem to have come back into fashion over the past five years," she regretted, adding that the arrow pointing campaign is "an ideal way of showing people that wearing fur is not harmless."

According to the International Fur Trade Association, global fur sales increased for the ninth consecutive year in 2007. Consumers spent 15.02 billion dollars on furs and accessories, a rise of 11.34 percent compared to 2006.

Vaucher said that LausAnimaliste members were surprised last year by the public's reaction, which was generally one of solidarity and amusement. The fur-wrapped targets were less amused. "They either tried to justify wearing fur or told us to go away," explained Vaucher, adding that, in the latter case, they obeyed. She said that action "never degenerates and remains at a fun level."

Campaigners occasionally target fake-fur wearers by mistake. Vaucher said that it was "sometimes difficult to be 100 percent sure".

"But if someone is wearing a fake fur that looks like the real thing, it's a form of approval," she added.

Switzerland's trade association SwissFur says it has signed the Washington Convention of CITES, the international body regulating the trade in endangered species in 1975 and is a member of the Gland-based International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Canton Vaud police spokesman Jean-Christophe Sauterel told Swisster that it is not illegal in Switzerland to film groups of people in the street and broadcast the images on the Internet or any other medium if no particular person

is singled out.

Vaucher said that LausAnimaliste, which belongs to the Swiss [Association for the Abolition of Vivisection](#), regularly organises demonstrations and always asks for police authorisation. Action in and around Lausanne includes mourning animals killed for the fur trade by dressing in black and silently standing in strategic places for one hour to raise public awareness. The group is currently collecting signatures for a petition to make Lausanne a fur-free city.