



University of Idaho
College of Agriculture

Cooperative Extension Service
Agricultural Experiment Station

August 1979

SELECTION AND CARE OF FAKE FUR

Sonja Rue*
Textiles and Clothing Specialist

Whether you want ready-to-wear or fabric by-the-yard, consider turning your next shopping jaunt into a fake fur safari. Current fashion, the energy crunch and inflation are three reasons why fake fur would be a good wardrobe choice. Man-made furs provide warmth without weight and cost much less than the real thing. If you haven't looked at or handled fake fur for some time, one of the first things you will notice is that textile technology has greatly improved the quality, appearance and handling ease of today's fake fur.

Fashion looks in fake fur range from short-cropped shearling to medium or long-haired types. Textures run the gamut from kitten soft to satin smooth to long and shaggy. Color, sheen and pattern can mimic real fur closely or be bright, bold designs that Mother Nature never dreamed of.

FIBER CONTENT

Many different synthetic fibers, blends and also natural fibers are used in fake furs. Performance, wear-life and care requirements are dependent on the fiber content, fabric construction and the applied finishes. Read the care label before you buy so you will be able to estimate about how much it will cost to maintain the garment.

Modacrylic, acrylic, polyvinyl chloride, polyester, nylon, rayon, cotton, wool and mohair are all part of the fake fur scene. The Textile Fiber Products Identification Act requires that bolt ends and garment labels specify:

- The percentage of each fiber used in making up more than 5 percent of the total fabric weight.
- The generic (family) name of each fiber included.
- The fiber content of the face (pile) separately from that of the fabric back (backing).

*The author has adapted this bulletin from a section of a North Dakota State University Cooperative Extension bulletin which she wrote while she was clothing specialist in that state.

FIBER CHARACTERISTICS

Acrylic, modacrylic and blends of these fibers often are used in fake furs because they are soft, resilient, easily cleaned and look like fur. All synthetic fibers are heat sensitive, but modacrylics and polyvinyl chlorides are especially sensitive, melting at lower temperatures than most synthetics. An advantage of modacrylic is its inherent flame-resistant qualities. Other fibers also can be made flame resistant by application of a topical finish or by changing their chemical formulation. If the added safety assurance you get from wearing a flame resistant garment is important to you, look for fake furs that have:

- flame resistant finishes (noted on label).
- modacrylic fiber content.
- short pile (traps less air than long fur).
- dense surface pile covering.

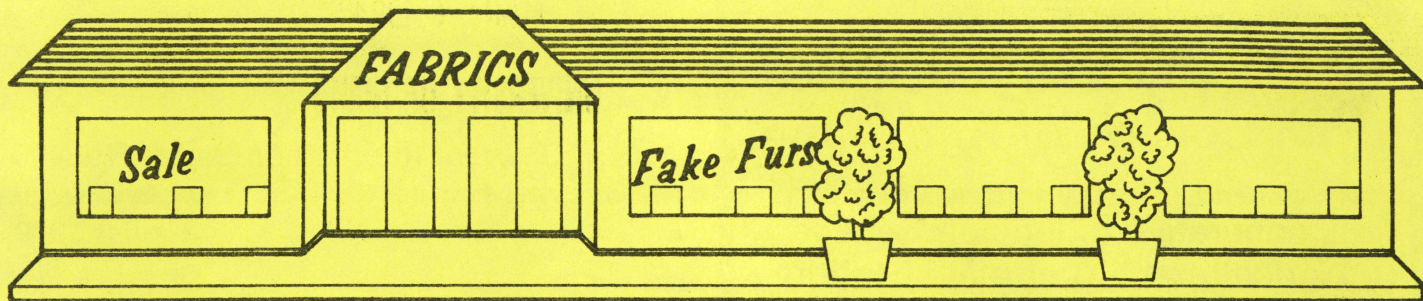
Rayon is one of the weaker synthetics. Fake furs made of rayon are generally inexpensive and beautiful. However, the low abrasion resistance of rayon fiber can cause worn front openings and bare elbows to appear on rayon pile garments sooner than one might normally expect. For additional information on fiber characteristics, ask for Fiber Facts, Idaho Current Information Series No. 256, at your County Extension office. By learning fiber characteristics, you can better judge expected performance and care needed.

SHOPPING HINTS

Consider eye appeal, comfort, fit, style and price when shopping for fake fur.

Pile and Backing Features

Look for a densely packed pile that is uniform in color, luster and texture. The pile should not part causing the backing to show. A closely packed pile mats less, wears better, burns more slowly (because less oxygen is trapped between the fibers to support the flame) and is warmer than a scant pile.



Reverse the fur to examine the backing. It should be firm but not stiff or board-like, on-grain and not easily stretched. The number and closeness of yarns in the backing and the denseness of fiber in the pile are the best indicators of warmth. Fake fur that is layered is generally warmer than that which is all one length. Length of pile alone is not a good indicator of warmth.

Hold fake fur up to the light and bend it back on itself to check for compactness. If a great deal of light passes through the backing, this generally indicates that the fabric will have inadequate resistance to the passage of cold air. It also indicates that the backing is loosely knit or woven and may cause shrinkage problems. Washing fake fur (some are washable) usually increases air passage except in cases where shrinkage causes increased density in the backing.

Matting or Pilling

Test a fake fur for tendencies to mat or pill (formation of small balls of fiber on surface) by briskly rubbing your hand up and down on an inconspicuous area of the pile. A noticeable change in appearance on the rubbed area may indicate a tendency for the pile to mat or pill. Press your finger firmly into the fur. Then brush the spot lightly with your finger tips. If pile is resilient (able to spring back into shape), no marks should be left after this treatment.

Construction Features

An expensive fake fur garment should be well-constructed with every seam reinforced and taped using a special sewing machine designed for construction of real fur. Popular-priced fake furs are made using sewing techniques similar to those described in Idaho Current Information Series No. 489, Sewing Fake Furs.

Fake fur garments are usually lined. An adhesive often is used to hold the pile to the backing. The adhesive makes the backing fabric somewhat abrasive to the touch. Lining adds to the comfort, wear-life and beauty of the garment. Linings in fake furs should be made of durable, abrasion-resistant fabric that is colorfast and has a static-resistant finish.

Shopping Reminder

With proper care fake furs can provide good service for the price you pay. Always consider the purpose for which the fake fur will be used before deciding which fiber content, finishes, type of construction and care you prefer.

CARE OF FAKE FUR

Fake furs do *not* all require the same type of care. Before you do anything to a soiled fake fur, *read the care label*.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, James L. Graves, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83843. We offer our programs and facilities to all people without regard to race, creed, color, sex or national origin.

Care Methods

Some fake furs can be machine washed, others require professional drycleaning or the more expensive furrier method. If care instructions are lost, drycleaning may be your best choice. However, the drycleaner is not responsible for damage that occurs in cleaning an unlabeled garment. To successfully wash a fake fur garment, not only the outer fabric but all other fabrics and trims used in the garment must be washable, shrinkage-free and colorfast.

Brush and Spot

Generally only a thorough, but gentle, brushing is required to renew the appearance of a fake fur between cleanings. Use a clean, natural bristle brush or a wire pet brush. To spot clean, stroke lightly in the direction of the nap with a damp cloth. Do not use a circular motion or the fibers might mat and the spot may be rubbed in deeper.

Avoid Heat

Synthetic fibers may flatten, turn brittle or melt if they come in contact with excess heat. For this reason machine drying, coin-operated drycleaning and pressing usually are not recommended. Avoid brushing against anything hot such as radiators or cigarettes. Designs that have been heat-set into the fake fur fabric also can be destroyed if temperatures used in cleaning and drying are too high.

Excess Moisture Removal

Fake furs have a tendency to repel rain and snow. Remove excess moisture from a garment by shaking it. Hang garment on a padded hanger in an open area that is away from a direct source of heat. When the garment is dry, brush gently against the pile and then with it. Do not use a back and forth stroke. Wet furs have a tendency to mat or flatten, especially if a person sits while wearing the garment.

Storage

Store fake furs in your clothes closet unless they have permanently attached real fur trim. Real fur requires special storage that is temperature and humidity controlled. Hang fake fur garments on well-padded hangers in an uncrowded location. For long term storage, a cool, dry place is best. Moths are not a problem if the fake fur garment is made of synthetic fiber and the garment is clean. Always check a garment for cleanliness before it is stored.