

**W**hen I see products promoted as “sustainable” and they are animal-based it demonstrates how easily consumers can be misled. The most popular animal-based materials are leather, wool, fur, down, feathers, cashmere, crocodile, sting ray, ostrich, and angora. And of course, animal-based furniture can never be sustainable. Animal-based fabrics are not only full of chemicals and poisons, they are destroying the planet due to the land needed to raise and feed these animals. (The process of tanning skins is one of the leading causes of pollution.)

*There is so much more to vegan design than you could possibly imagine. But once you scratch the surface you see that animal products and the cruelty that comes with them are everywhere. Going vegan and healthy in your décor is a process and takes time. But educating ourselves, waking up to the atrocities that can so easily be hidden within a home, is the first step towards a kinder, more compassionate, purer world.*

**1. START SMALL.** Choose either one room, one type of animal based material to replace, or 5 pieces of animal-based furniture to replace. Don't attempt to redo an entire home at once.

**2. RECYCLE.** I'm always asked the question about throwing out animal based materials when veganizing a home. NO! Throwing out things is destroying the planet. If you want to get rid of it, give it to someone else or donate it.

**3. FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH ANIMAL-FREE MATERIALS.** Hemp, cotton, bamboo, linen, cork, rubber (kapok), and buckwheat are a few of my favorites.

**4. KNOW YOUR CERTIFICATIONS.** GOTS (Global Organic Textile Exchange) certifies that the materials are completely organic. OEKO TEX Standard is a certification that shows the materials are chemical-free and nontoxic. GREENGUARD certification helps buyers identify products and materials that have low chemical emissions, improving the quality of the air in which the products are used. (You will see this certification on many materials including flooring and fabrics.) FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification ensures that products come from responsibly managed forests.

**5. BUY BAMBOO LYOCCELL.** It's a fabric that is ethical, sustainable, and healthy. Lyocell is made from the pulp of eucalyptus trees and bamboo is a very sustainable tree. But do not buy bamboo viscose. Although bamboo is sustainable, viscose is highly unethical and extremely toxic. The oil palm tree, the home of orangutans, is one of the ingredients of viscose.

**6. KNOW WHAT TO AVOID.** Don't buy anything that is labeled “wrinkle free” such as sheets. These products are soaked in formaldehyde. Look for paints, glues, solvents, adhesives etc. that contain low or no VOC's (Volatile Organic Compounds). VOC's contaminate indoor air quality. And don't buy anything with AZO dyes. This dye is banned in Europe but still allowed in the US.

**7. GET TO KNOW YOUR COUCH.** Make sure that if a sofa is touted as “vegan” it doesn't refer to the fabric only. Many sofas are manufactured with down wrapping underneath. Confirm there is no down within the sofa.

**8. SLEEP WELL.** Our mattresses and bedding are key to our health since we spend about one third of our life in bed. Wool is a common material used in mattresses. Make sure the mattress is not only vegan but also nontoxic. Many vegan mattresses are made with toxic materials. Confirm that they are allergy-friendly made without harmful chemicals: no latex, soy, GMOs, vinyl/PVC, phthalates, formaldehyde, flame retardants, or perfluorinated compounds (PFCs).

**9. REST EASY.** Many pillows are filled with Down. It takes about 12 geese live plucked to fill one standard bed pillow. Buckwheat and kapok are two of my favorite bed pillows. They are comfortable, ethical and nontoxic.

**10. GETTING BETWEEN THE SHEETS.** Stay away from wrinkle-free and silk. Silkworms are inhumanely boiled. Linen is great but takes a few washings to get very soft.

**11. PAINT A HAPPY PICTURE.** Vegan paints do not contain animal products, such as casein, which is the primary protein in milk; shellac, which is a resin secreted from the female lac bug; and ox gall, which comes from cows. Most vegan paints do not contain heavy metals or VOCs.

**12. SPOT A FAKE.** Many large retailers have been caught selling real fur as faux—you cannot always trust labels or advertising. So here's what you do: Separate the fur. If it looks similar to what your hair looks like (if you have a full head of hair) then it's most likely real fur. Fake fur, when separated, looks sewn.

**13. SPEAK UP! DON'T BE SHY.** Ask the salesperson to provide documentation that the item is not animal based. If they can't then there's a strong chance that it's not vegan. Understand that many retailers have never been asked these questions before. But you have the power to make change with every nickel you spend.

*Deborah DiMare is the founder of DiMareDesign.com and the author of Vegan Interiors.*



# ADOPT A TURKEY

Remember when your hand had the power to give life to a turkey? All you had to do was trace your fingers on a piece of paper, do a little decorating, add a face, and bam—a turkey friend magically sprang to life right before your eyes. This holiday season, Farm Sanctuary is putting the power to give life to turkeys back into your hands through our annual **#AdoptATurkey** project!

**More than 236 million turkeys are slaughtered each year in the United States.** Most of these sensitive, social birds are inhumanely raised on factory farms, sometimes with as many as 10,000 birds packed into one poorly-ventilated building. To make matters worse, turkeys aren't protected by the federal Humane Slaughter Act, which requires that animals be unconscious or otherwise unable to feel pain when being slaughtered.

If you love these cuddly, intelligent birds as much as we do, you know that this is nothing to be thankful for. That's why, since 1986, Farm Sanctuary's Adopt a Turkey program has encouraged people to give a turkey a hand by symbolically adopting one of our rescued turkeys instead of eating one.

**Visit [AdoptATurkey.org](https://www.adoptaturkey.org)  
to meet the flock and adopt today!**