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# Weir changes mind about wearing fur

(AP) -- Animal rights groups can leave [Johnny Weir](#) alone now.

Weir will replace the fox on his costume with faux fur after receiving "hate mail and death threats" from animal rights activists, agent Tara Modlin said Thursday.

"He's changing it because he needs to focus on skating," she said.

Friends of Animals posted an open letter to Weir after he added white fox fur to the left shoulder of his free skate costume for the U.S. Figure Skating Championships. On Tuesday, the animal advocacy group called his costume designer, Stephanie Handler, and faxed a press release about its open letter to her business.

Since then, Weir has heard from other anti-fur activists, Modlin said. Although People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals made its case in a professional manner, Modlin said others did not \_ to the point she and Weir were concerned someone might disrupt his performances at the Vancouver Olympics.

Weir qualified for his second Olympic team by finishing third at nationals.



"I do not want something as silly as my costume disrupting my second Olympic experience and my chance at a medal, a dream I have had since I was a kid," Weir said in a statement, first published by icenetwork.com.

Priscilla Feral, president of Friends of Animals, said no one from the group had threatened Weir. She applauded Weir's decision.

"If he's made the smart decision I hoped he'd make, to shun the skins of animals and not decorate his costumes with them, that's a very good thing and I'm happy to hear it," Feral said.

Weir makes no secret of his love of fashion -- fur included -- and he's received letters and videos from PETA and other animal-rights advocates over the years. Although he respects their positions and is fully aware of how pelts are obtained, Weir has said wearing fur is a personal choice.

There are other causes that concern him more, he said, such as homelessness, soldiers dying and the devastation in Haiti.

"I hope these activists can understand that my decision to change my costume is in no way a victory for them, but a draw," Weir said in his statement. "I am not changing in order to appease them, but to protect my integrity and the integrity of the Olympic Games as well as my fellow competitors.

"Just weeks away from hitting my starting position on the ice in Vancouver, I have technique and training to worry about and that trumps any costume and any threat I may receive."

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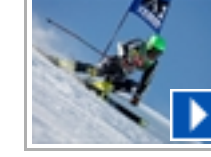
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