

We tried Reformation's recycled cashmere sweaters — here's how they feel in person

By Mara Leighton Dec 12, 2019



Reformation

LA startup [Reformation](#) has a line of "[Conscious Cashmere](#)" made with 70% recycled cashmere.

While not as sustainable as 100% recycled options, Reformation's [Conscious Cashmere](#) (\$148) is a rare opportunity to shop responsibly without making trade-offs for style.

In my experience, Reformation's mostly recycled cashmere was indistinguishable from new cashmere — and it's held up well for over a year of less-than-gentle handling.

Reformation's VP of Sustainability Kathleen Talbot spoke with Business Insider about the sweater line and the company's sustainability practices at large.

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Reformation Cashmere Crew Sweater

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It's hard to find cashmere that deserves to be called "conscious" or sustainable. In fact, a lot of people would argue it does not — and cannot — exist. The process of creating cashmere is so inherently detrimental, requiring lots of resources and incurring lots of environmental degradation, that sustainable cashmere may be considered an oxymoron.

The problem for all of us would-be conscious shoppers is that cashmere also feels heavenly. It's warm, it's soft, it's cozy. It's like experiencing the first moment that warmth hits you after a cold day outdoors on a never-ending loop. And the demand is understandably high — which has led to dangerous overgrazing in Mongolia and essential grasslands being turned into deserts.

The imperfectly perfect solution is to recycle the cashmere we have on earth before creating it anew. It's the sustainability trick that [many retail startups have been adopting](#) — phasing out virgin materials and swapping in more eco-friendly alternatives. [Everlane's ReNew outerwear is one example](#).

For LA-based brand [Reformation](#), the standout is its [Conscious Cashmere line](#). Each sweater is made of 70% repurposed, regenerated cashmere clippings. It feels the same as traditional cashmere and costs about the same (\$100-\$148), but has markedly less impact on the environment. On average, one kilogram (about two pounds) of recycled cashmere has 80% less environmental impact than conventional cashmere.



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Reformation's cashmere collection is limited — like most genuinely sustainable collections — but covers the classics and then some: a [classic crew](#), [boyfriend crew](#), [boyfriend turtleneck](#), [cropped turtleneck](#), [cropped crew](#), [v-neck](#), [wrap sweater](#), and a [boat-neck sweater](#). Most are priced at \$148. Colors range, but you'll find plenty of seasonal staples like maroon and forest green alongside grey, black, white, and soft pink.

I have a now-retired Conscious Cashmere cardigan from Reformation, and I've been most impressed with how well the company manages to blend sustainability and style. The cardigan is thick, slim-fitting, and has enough unique design elements (like a deep V-neck in the front and back) to look and feel like something special. I found the material to be indistinguishable from cardigans made from entirely new cashmere, and the fabric is soft enough to wear against bare skin for a full day without complaint. The garment has held up well over time, even with less-than-gentle handling. In terms of sizing, I found it to be true to size. But, if you're in between sizes, Reformation is known for erring on the smaller side, so I'd suggest sizing up.



Reformation

Conscious Cashmere is just one example of Reformation's larger sustainability efforts.

Reformation's Vice President of Sustainability, Kathleen Talbot, told Business Insider the reason why the cashmere sweaters aren't 100% recycled isn't due to the typical roadblocks of price and availability. It's to preserve the best possible quality. As greater percentages of recycled cashmere were introduced, the integrity of the fabric dipped. For the brand, 70/30 is the win-win ratio.

In general, [Reformation's](#) sustainability initiatives are far better than the [retail industry](#) at large. The company has been offsetting its carbon emissions since 2015, and it lets shoppers buy their own climate credits for things like destination weddings [directly on its site](#). It has an incentive program with [ThredUp](#), sells vintage items in stores, and works with designers and fabric warehouses to buy the leftover fabrics that would otherwise wind up in landfills. Programs like RefCycling will recycle your clothes for free. It publishes a public [Sustainability Report every year](#). And while Talbot describes supply chains as "fragmented and complex," the company is working towards being able to answer the question of "Who made my clothes?" — at every level of the supply chain.

While not as perfectly eco-friendly as vintage, Conscious Cashmere has mass appeal and few trade-offs.

It's worth mentioning that anything new isn't as sustainable as anything not new, but make no mistake: Reformation's [recycled cashmere line](#) is genuinely exciting. It's a have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too option that the average person can appreciate and that many shoppers likely purchase without any knowledge of the sustainability ethos.

It may not be perfectly sustainable, but it's going to be the best option for a lot of people — and that's a big step in the right direction.

[Shop Reformation's Conscious Cashmere here, \\$148](#)



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Mara Leighton is the senior education and personal development reporter for Insider Reviews. In the spring of 2020, Mara spearheaded Insider Reviews' new [education beat](#). She's reported on [Yale's most popular course on happiness](#) as well as...

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