

# Fur industry: Synonym of animal cruelty?



Fatima Vazpinto, Jiska van Djik, Kristin Gellein, Morten Ingebrigtsen  
and Manuela Pazacci

## 1 Introduction

“ I think fur look much better on the animal than on the models” Stella Mc Cartney

### 1.1 Fur farming

Animals have been kept in captivity for the sake of their fur since the end of the 19-century. In Norway however, this tradition is rather young, and the fur farming was not established until in 1920-30. [1]

31 million animals are raised and killed on fur farms each year. Mink account for 26 million, fox 4.1 million. Chinchillas, racoon dogs (not to be confused with the North American racoon), fitch and sable make up for most of the other ranch-raised furbearers. Mink and fox are genetically wild animals that are not adapted to a life in captivity. Whereas a wild mink would range a territory that is approximately 3 square kilometres in size, a ranch-raised mink is confined to a cage that is 0,5 m<sup>2</sup>. The intensive confinement leads to self-mutilation, cannibalism, and a high level stress which breaks down the animals immune systems. The animals are denied adequate space, normal social interactions, and free movement. As a result, the animals often exhibit distressed neurotic behaviour, pacing frantically back and forth in their cages. Scandinavian countries account for 80% of world fox production and 54% of world mink production. [2]

The Norwegian law for animal rights claims that the natural instincts and natural needs of the animal should be taken into consideration. While other European countries like Great Britain and Austria has forbidden fur farming, Norway has not taken any major steps towards limiting the suffering of these animals. I 1998 the Norwegian organisation Dyrebeskyttelsen Norge claimed a lawsuit against the fur-trading business for braking the dyrevernsløven. They achieved that Lagmannsretten in 1999 made a statement that the fur industry was unethical and that fur farming of mink and fox is done in a way that is in conflict with the animals original and basic needs. Even so, the court would not forbid fur farming. [3]

### 1.2 Trapping

” It is almost impossible to overstate the suffering, fear, acute pain, aggravated by thirst and useless attempts of escape” Charles Darwin about the leghold trap, 1863 [4]

10 million animals are trapped for their fur each year. The United States, Canada, and Russia account for most of the world’s wild fur production. In Norway the number of skins from trapped animals is about 50.000 (NOAH). Approximately two non-target animals are caught for every one furbearing animal. These non-target animals include squirrels, opossums, dogs, cats, and even endangered species and birds of prey that are attracted to baited sets. The steel jaw leghold trap is the most common trap used by the fur industry, followed by the wire snare, and the Conibear body-gripping trap that crushes the animal.

88 countries and 5 states have banned the leghold trap because of its inherent cruelty and because it is non-selective and traps whatever animal steps into it. Norway is one of these countries, the leghold trap has been forbidden since 1932. The leghold trap is legal in China, USA, Canada, Korea, France, Spain, Russia, and Eastern Europe. [2]

### 1.3 The fight against the fur industry

”Miljøvernundersøkelsen 1995” establishes that 50 % of the population in Norway think it is important to work against the fur industry. More and more European countries have got a strong opinion against the fur farming. This has gradually got political consequences and many countries have already agreed to legal framework that makes fur farming impossible. A new trend has also grown up in the fashion industry; an ethical consumption, where respect for animals is an important ingredients. A number of designers have taken distance to the use of fur. Among these are Giorgio Armani, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Donatella Verace and Stella McCartney. Many supermodels have also participated in anti-fur campaigns. Among these are Cindy Crawford, Tyra Banks, Christy Thurlington and Emma Sjøberg. [2]

### 1.3 Concept and assessment of animal welfare

According to the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare the welfare of a commercial farm animal depends upon its biological features and the housing and management conditions to which it is subjected [21]. It is said that the welfare of an animal will become poorer if it cannot successfully adapt to the conditions in which it is kept. At the behaviour level, for instance, the animal can be prevented from developing or performing species specific behaviours because of the lack of trigger, restricted space or simply because of the impossibility to perform species specific activities. Lack of trigger, restricted space and the lack of appropriate outlet for specific activities often induce suffering, the extent of which depends on the importance of the behavioural activity for that specific animal[22]. Welfare therefore has been defined as the state of an animal as regards its attempt to cope with its environment [23]. Welfare varies from ease of coping to difficult coping or some failure to cope. Pleasurable mental states will often accompany good welfare and unpleasant states are generally associated with coping failure [21].

The Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare further states that environmental conditions that significantly depart from an animal’s ecological and behavioural repertoire can be the source of welfare problems. The extent of welfare problems depends on appearance, duration and intensity of the environmental conditions and on the animal’s ability to adjust to them [21]. Assessing welfare problems in, for instance fur farm animals, can be done by taking a combination of measures on their physical health, biological functions and behaviour into account. In general, high premature mortality, high morbidity, high risk of body injury, the inability to express valued species specific activities including social interactions, grooming, exploration and play, and the occurrence of abnormal behaviour and of physiological signs of stress, including alterations in immunity, indicate that there are major animal welfare problems.

## 1.4 Aim and perspective

In this project we are looking at the fur industry from the animal right organisations point of view. The fur industry consists of fur farming and trapping of wild animals. We have chose to focus on fur farming. This is because we think that this is a bigger problem than the trapping. In the case of trapping, at least the animal has lived a hopefully good and meaningful life in the wild. The trapping it self is a horrifying experience for the animal, and the traps which really hurts the animal (like the leghold trap) should be illegal in every country. Anyway, the animals at the fur farms suffer their whole life, and the killing of these animals must be a relief for them. At least the suffering comes to an end.

We have chose to divide the subject into 4 parts. First we are looking at the economical aspects of fur farming. Then we go deeper into the laws that deal with fur farming and the keeping of animals. Finally we discuss what impact the caging and holding of originally wild animals has to the animal itself

## 2 INTERNATIONAL FUR TRADE

### 2.1 Producers

The majority of animals reared in cages for fur are mink and fox. Most of the world's farmed fur is produced in Europe, accounting for 70% of global mink production (EU = 64%) and 63% of fox production (EU = 47%). North America and Russia/the Baltic States account for 13% and 11% respectively of global mink production, while Russia/the Baltic States and China account respectively for 11% and 27% of fox production. In the EU fur farming is concentrated in Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands. Denmark and Finland are the world's largest producers and exporters of mink and fox skins respectively. [5]



### 2.2 Furbearers used for fur production

Technically, the term furbearer includes all mammals possessing some form of hair. However, the term is often used to identify mammal species that are used for fur production. Fur is obtained from both farmed and wild species of fur bearing animals. 85% of the world's fur

trade originates from farmed species that have been domesticated (Note: farmed fox and mink are considered domesticated), while 15% are wild species.

The main **farmed** species are:

- mink (*Mustela vison*)
- silver fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
- blue fox (*Alopex lagopus*)
- sable (*Martes zibellina*)
- black fitch/polecat (*Mustela putorius*)
- white fitch/polecat (*Mustela eversmanni*)
- finn raccoon (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*);
- chinchilla (*Chinchilla lanigera*)
- nutria (*Myocastor coypus*).

Many **wild** fur species are used in the trade:

- grey fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus* and *Pseudalopex griseus*)
- red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
- nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) (mainly from South and North America)
- beaver (*Castor canadensis*)
- coyote (*Canis latrans*)
- marten (*Martes americana*)
- mink (*Mustela vison*)
- raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)
- musquash (*Ondatra zibethica*)
- russian sable (*Martes zibellina*)
- russian and Chinese squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)
- ermine (*Mustela erminea*)
- kolinski (*Mustela sibirica*)
- weasel (*Mustela nivalis*)
- Opossum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*)
- Fisher (*Martes Pennati*)
- Long Tail Weasel
- Short tail Weasel
- Mink Badger
- Striped Skunk
- Skunk (*Mephitis Mephitis*)
- Otter (*Lutra Canadensis*)
- Bobcat (*Lynx Rufus*)
- Lynx, (*Lynx lynx*)
- Gray Wolf
- Red Wolf
- Wolverine

Skins from **goats** and **sheep** also enter the fur trade (ex. karakul lamb, *Ovis aries*). [5] [6]

## 2.3 Business

*Demand for fur garments exists worldwide, but the largest consuming markets are China, Germany, Italy, Korea, Japan, Russia and many of the former Soviet Republics, Spain and the USA. Markets for fur garments have greatly expanded in the prospering economies of Japan, Korea and China only in recent years.*

Producing over 12 million mink skins, fur farming was worth Euro 514 million to Danish farmers in 2002, making it the country's third largest agricultural export product after bacon and cheese. In Finland, where over 2 million foxes were produced in 2002, the annual value of fur production at Euro 250 million is greater than that of beef. Fur farming is also important in the Netherlands where 3 million skins were produced in 2002, and in some of the Central and Eastern European countries that have applied for EU membership – Latvia, Poland, Lithuania and Estonia. In Poland, the production figures for mink and fox skins in 2002 were 600,000 and 260,000 respectively.

In Canada and the United States, there are 1135 fur farms producing mainly mink, but also some fox and chinchilla. In Canada, approximately 1.5 million mink pelts are produced by fur farms annually. In the United States, some 330 mink farms across 28 states produce around 2.6 million pelts annually – worth around US\$86 million. The majority of American mink farms are family-run, depending exclusively on fur farming for their livelihood, with everyone from the grandparents to grandchildren providing the labour.

In South America, both mink and chinchilla continue to be farmed in Argentina, producing approximately 10,000 mink and 27,000 chinchilla skins per annum.

It is estimated that China produces over 1 million mink and fox skins respectively, while the production in Russia in 2002 was 2.7 million mink and about 400,000 fox skins. [5]

## 2.4 Employment

The fur trade world-wide employs full-time over 1 million people. In Europe, there are 6,000 fur farms providing full-time employment to 30,000 individuals. The fur sector as a whole provides some 214,000 full and part time jobs in the European Union. In North America there are 760 mink and fox farms (400 in USA and 360 in Canada). Most farms are small family-run businesses. The fur sector as a whole provides 255,000 full and part time jobs in North America. Revenue from fur farming allows many farmers, particularly in Europe, to **supplement income from other agricultural activities**. Fur farming also allows farming to remain economically viable where climatic conditions limit the options open to farmers in terms of what they can produce and market profitably. [5]

## 2.5 Animal by-products

Manure becomes **organic fertilizer** for other agricultural sectors, while mink fat can be recycled as an important ingredient in hypoallergenic **soaps and hair products**. [5]

### 3 FUR FARMING – REGULATIONS IN EUROPE

#### 3.1 Council Directive 98/58/EC

##### PROTECTION OF ANIMALS KEPT FOR FARMING PURPOSES. (Full text attached)

In the European Union, the Directive lays down minimum standards for the protection of animals bred or kept for farming purposes, including fur farmed animals. Parts of the Directive are presented as follows:

Article 3: Member States shall make provision to ensure that the owners or keepers take all reasonable steps to ensure the **welfare** of animals under their care and to ensure that those animals are not caused any **unnecessary pain, suffering or injury**.

Article 4: Member States shall ensure that the conditions under which animals (other than fish, reptiles or amphibians) are bred or kept, having regard to their species and to their **degree of development, adaptation and domestication**, and to their **physiological and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge**, comply with the provisions set out in the Annex.

Article 6: Member States shall ensure that inspections are carried out by the competent authority **to check compliance with the provisions of this Directive**.

Annex 7: The **freedom of movement** of an animal, having regard to its species and in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge, must not be restricted in such a way as to cause it unnecessary suffering or injury.

Where an animal is continuously or regularly tethered or confined, it must be given the space appropriate to its **physiological and ethological needs** in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge.

#### 3.2 Council Directive 93/119/EC

##### PROTECTION OF ANIMALS AT THE TIME OF SLAUGHTER OR KILLING (Full text attached)

This Directive shall apply to the movement, lairaging, restraint, stunning, slaughter and killing of animals bred and kept for the production of meat, skin, fur or other products and to methods of killing animals for the purpose of disease control. Some parts of the Directive are presented as follows:

Article 3: Animals shall be spared any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering during movement, lairaging, restraint, stunning, slaughter or killing.

Annex F: Methods for killing fur animals

1. Mechanically-operated instruments which penetrate the brain.
2. Injection of an overdose of a drug with anaesthetic properties.
3. Electrocutation with cardiac arrest.
4. Exposure to carbon monoxide.
5. Exposure to chloroform.
6. Exposure to carbon dioxide.

The competent authority shall decide on the most appropriate method of killing for the different species concerned in compliance with the general provisions of Article 3 of this Directive.

...However, for foxes, where electrodes are applied to the mouth and rectum, a current of an average value of 0,3 amps must be applied for at least 3 seconds.

### 3.3 Recommendation of the Council of Europe, 1999

The Council of Europe adopted a Regulation, designed to ensure **the health and welfare of farmed fur animals**. The Recommendation deals comprehensively with matters of animal care, from the farming environment to stockmanship and inspection. New scientific evidence when adopted by the Council of Europe is enshrined in Recommendations on minimum standards. It can then be applied in member countries if it is considered to further improve existing animal welfare standards. The Recommendation is legally binding in Germany, has been incorporated into national law in Finland and Norway and is expected to be national law in Denmark.

In addition, fur farming is covered by the same EU environmental laws that apply to all EU **agricultural sectors**.

## 4 Legislation and subsidies

### 4.1 Legislation in Norway

The Norwegian fur farming industry is principally regulated through the Animal Protection Act (“Dyrevernsløven”) of 20th December 1974, no. 73 [7]. This law applies to living mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish and crustaceans (§1). The parts that concern the fur farming industry are for instance the statement that “Animals should be well taken care of, and their instincts and natural needs should be regarded so that it does not suffer unnecessarily” (§2). People who holds animals in captivity are also obliged to make sure the animals are allowed enough living space, and with temperatures and access to fresh air, light and water according to each species’ needs (§4 and §5). In general, whether the fur farming industry of today is in conflict with this Act, boils down to how one interprets words like “unnecessarily”, “sufficient”, “enough” etc.

By its very nature, an Act like this is relatively broad, and contains few specific demands. To rectify this, Norwegian legislation system also contains a number of regulations (“forskrifter”) in addition to the Acts themselves. These are formulated by the bureaucracy with warrant in the corresponding Act, which, of course, is given by the Parliament (Stortinget). Thus, there is one central regulation governing fur farming in Norway from an animal welfare perspective, and that is the Regulation of Fur Farming (“Forskrift om hold av pelsdyr”) of 20th September 1998, no. 901 [10]. This regulation applies to the most common species of Norwegian fur

farming; the red/silver fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), blue fox (*Alopex lagopus*), hybrids between these, mink (*Mustela vison*) and ferret (*Mustela putorius*). The Ministry of Agriculture can also expand this regulation to apply to other species as well.

The regulation is quite specific in some areas, defining minimum areas of cages for each species and ages, methods of sedation/killing and skinning of the animals. However, in other areas, the regulation is rather vague, especially when it comes to the general welfare of the individual animals. Here also, one finds phrases like “satisfactory hygiene” (§3), “sufficient feeding” (§8) etc., without quantifying this any further.

The conditions in the fur farms does not seem to meet all the demands in the legislation, and the legislation also seems to have a potential for improvement. This is also stated in the white paper “Husbandry and animal welfare”, St.meld. nr. 12, 2002/2003 [8]. Here, the Ministry of Agriculture explicitly states that the conditions regarding animal welfare in the fur farming industry have to be significantly improved during the next few years, and also that the legislation should be examined to rectify that. The Ministry sets a deadline of ten years, when the fur farming industry has to fulfil these demands, otherwise the authorities will consider phasing out fur farming in Norway.

From an animal welfare perspective it seems odd, to say the least, that as the Animal Protection Act states that animals kept in captivity should have “enough space [...] to fulfil the needs of each species”, the regulation on fur farming still defines minimum sizes of cages that seem to be far from the phrasing in the Act itself. Thus, one has the situation in which the regulation warranted in the Act is inconsistent with the Act itself. This is unacceptable, and the Ministry also points out that the possibility of movement of the animals has to be significantly improved. Still, the Ministry also praises the fur farming industry for actually having stricter internal standards than what is demanded in the legislation, something that the industry itself also points out in its action plan for animal welfare. [9]

## 4.2 Subsidies

The state budget for 2004 proposes to allocate 81.86 mill. NOK to animal breeding, and this also includes fur farming. This is 1 mill. NOK less than the previous year. In addition, there is a post in the budget for subsidy for fur animal fodder, where the government proposes to allocate 27.2 mill. NOK, 6 mill. less than in 2003 (Finansdepartementet 2003). There are also a number of other forms of agricultural subsidies, which also benefit the fur farming industry. Hence, the complete picture of subsidies to this particular industry is complex and difficult to assess. However, it seems clear that the fur farming industry in Norway is dependent on government subsidies, and thus the Norwegian authorities subsidise an industry which the themselves say is far from fulfilling the legislative demands [(Landbruksdepartementet 2002). A removal of these subsidies is therefore believed to mean the end of fur farming in Norway.

## 5 The Economic side

### 5.1 Summary

In earlier times, man used coats of fur bearing animals for his own protection, to be kept warm. This is no longer a necessity for man, but still an industry of “farming” fur has developed. Today, this industry is dominant in Canada, America, the Scandinavian States, China and Russia. Fur farming started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in North America and spread to Europe in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, it is an important branch of animal husbandry in many countries<sup>1</sup>.

Today, fur trade is an international business, adding value to many different economies on its journey from its origins to luxury shops of North America, the Far East and Europe [17].

Markets for fur garments have traditionally existed in North America, Europe, Russia and the Nordic countries and these remain important. But in recent years sales of furs have greatly expanded in the prospering economies of Japan, Korea and China. Supply and demand fluctuates and can be cyclical, like that for most manufactured products, the main factor being levels of economic confidence - though periods of successive warm winters can also depress sales. 1996 and 1997 saw a major revival, with many markets showing an increase in retail sales [17].

### 5.2 Europe

European farmers produce most of the world’s farmed fur. It is a thriving agricultural community. Except for Portugal and Luxemburg there are fur animal farms in all European Union (EU) members states<sup>2</sup>. Here fur farming is concentrated in Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands[13]. However, when it comes to garment manufacture, the most important member states are Greece, Italy, Germany and Spain.

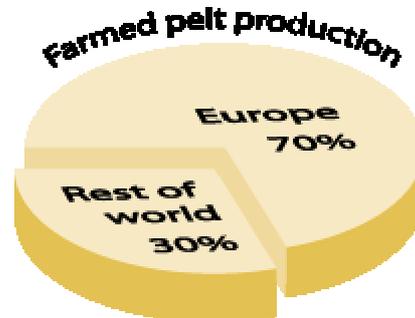
The European Fur Breeder’s Association (EFBA) reports on the existence of 8,000 fur farms in its member states, providing full-time employment to 30,000 individuals. These farms are responsible for an average annual production of 19 million mink and 2.8 million fox skins at a total value of 625 million Euros. The fur sector as a whole provides some 214,000 full and part time jobs in the European Union. Revenue from fur farming allows many farmers, particularly in Europe, to supplement income from other agricultural activities. Fur farming also allows farming to remain economically viable where climatic conditions limit the options open to farmers in terms of what they can produce and market profitably [12].

### 5.3 The Scandinavian states

Fur farming was worth 332 million Euros to Danish farmers in 1998 and fur was that country’s fourth largest agricultural export product. In Finland the annual value of fur production is 250 million Euros (bigger than that of beef) [12].

There are some 1 800 fur farms in Norway housing approximately 585 000 fox and 395 000 mink. Since the 1980s, the Government, especially in areas needing rural development, has promoted fur trade. In 1992 the fur farming industry received 70 million

Norwegian kroner in subsidies. The leghold trap has been forbidden in Norway since 1932, but a variety of other traps are permitted and some 50 000 trapped animals go to the fur trade. Norway is responsible for 19% of the world's fox and 1% of the world's mink production. It also imports fur for tens of millions of Norwegian kroner from countries that permit the use of the leghold trap [16].



**Fig.1** – Worldwide farmed pelt production

#### 5.4 U.S.A.

The fur industry is one of North America's oldest and most historically significant industries, supporting thousands of jobs. The fur sector as a whole provides some 255,000 full and part time jobs in North America. Here there are some 760 mink and fox farms (400 in USA and 360 in Canada), being most of them small family-run businesses<sup>2</sup>. In 1994, family fur farms in North America produces approximately 3.3 million mink and fox pelts with a value of nearly \$113 million. The U.S. produces about 10% of the world's mink supply, while Canada accounts for another 4 percent. Much of this fur is exported to other parts of the world. Many more mink are raised than foxes, and mink farms are generally larger operations than fox farms [15].

In all, fur farming is an integral component in North America's diversified agricultural economy, making \$ 250million contribution to the economy, while providing needed for thousands of farm families[18].

#### 5.5 Hong Kong

Hong Kong is the world's major source of quality fur garments and accessories. Major export items include apparel made of mink and fox fur, as well as accessories such as hats, stoles, muffs, scarves and cuffs. The majority of Hong Kong's furriers have set up production facilities on the Chinese mainland as a result of seeking relatively lower production costs there. Still, many major sub-sectors of the fur industry, particularly sales and distribution, remain in Hong Kong. In addition, more than 700 companies are engaged in the trading of fur in Hong Kong [14].

After rising year-on-year by 7% in 2001, the growth of Hong Kong's fur exports slowed down in the first six months of 2002. During the January-June period, Hong Kong's total exports of fur only edged up year-on-year by 1%. Japan, the US and the EU are the three leading fur markets of Hong Kong. They altogether take up more than 80% of all Hong Kong's fur exports [14].

## 5.6 Russia

Fur farming in Russia is a relatively young branch of animal husbandry, started in the twenties of the XXth century. After World War II farming became an essential part of the agricultural production of the country and continued to develop successfully until the beginning of the nineties [20]. In 1998, Russia experienced an economic crisis that brought their fur trade to a halt. This is significant because in 1997 Russia consumed half the worlds fur skins.

The curent situation in Russia is characterised by considerable changes caused by the reform of economic relations in general, including the agro-industrial sphere. The increased of production costs exceeded the growth of the market prices. As a result, the number of animals on the farms and the production of skins have fallen [20].

## 5.7 Worldwide

WORLD PRODUCTION OF RANCHED MINK increased by 7% in the 2001. According to figures compiled annually by Oslo Fur Auctions, 2001's crop amounts to 29.4 million, compared with 27.5 million in 2000. This would make it the largest in more than a decade and reflecting encouragement from increased demand and resultant higher prices. The biggest increase in terms of numbers was shown by Denmark, which is also the world's largest mink producer. That country produced 12.3 million animals (2001), compared with 10.9 million (2000), an increase of 13%. Nearly all of the major producers showed increases, or at least maintained last year's levels. The United States was the only one of the majors to come up with fewer mink, which would confirm earlier reports that its crop would be down about 5% because of abnormal weather conditions and other factors.

WORLD PRODUCTION OF RANCHED FOXES also rose in 2001, even more than the mink sector, according to Oslo Fur Auctions. Here, too, the increase was in response to greater demand, mostly from the trimmings sector and particularly from Russia and China. The total world fox output went up 8% to 4.3 million, compared with just fewer than 4 million in 2000. Scandinavia produced about 60% of this crop, those countries accounting for most of the difference from the year 2000. Finland again was by far the largest producer, its crop up 10% to 2.1 million, or about half of the total world production. Norway was up 4% to 370,000 and China, the next largest producer, was estimated to be up 11% to 1 million [19].

## 5.8 Economic Impact [17]

The fur industry extends widely, and here are some examples of its global economic impact:

- Over 1 million people are employed full-time by thr fur trade worldwide;
- Fur sales worldwide totalled some US\$ 11 billion in 2001/02;
- Some 117,000 enterprises exist worldwide – retailers, dressers, brokers...;
- Annual retail fur sales for the US alone were US\$ 1.5 billion in 2001/02. The US fur industry comprises approximately 1,400 retailers and 100 manufacturers;
- In Canada, the entire fur industry adds some Can\$ 800 million to the Canadian economy annually, employing some 75,000 Canadians in total;

Hong Kong is the world's leading exporter of fur clothing to the value of more than US\$ 230 million annually;

In Denmark, fur farming was worth 514 million Euros in 2002, the country's third largest export after bacon and cheese;

In Finland, the annual fur production value is 514 million Euros, greater than of beef, with over 50 % of fur farmers relying on fur farming as their sole source of income.

**Every year, a well – organised fur trade spends millions to glamorize the fur coat and to mask the real price of fur – pains, mutilation and death for millions of animals.**

## 6 Animal welfare on fur farms

### 6.1 Housing

The Norwegian fur trade industry has set up guidelines for cage size and animal density inside the cages [24]. The guidelines recommend cage sizes for the mink being 30 x 40 x 90 cm, and for the fox being 60 x 102 x 75 cm. Mink can be held pair wise but the minimum cage size for the foxes is meant for 1 fox only. New Norwegian welfare regulations that are effective by 2009 prescribe 75 x 100 x 75 cm for single foxes[25].

Norwegian fur farmers are visited annually by quality assurance groups of Norwegian Fur Breeders Association (NFBA) who record statistics on housing conditions and management procedures in relation to animal welfare and the environment [25]. The report of NFBA for 1999 included 690 of a total of about 900 Norwegian fox farms and showed that 26% of the farms the cages were in agreement with the new welfare regulations that are effective by 2009, while on 40% more than half of the cages complied with them. Too small width was the most common single problem (35%).

Because of disease control and warranty of fur quality, mink and foxes are kept under clean conditions, most times on mesh floors, higher up away from the ground surface, and with limited water supply. Food, in a form of pasta that contains debris of the slaughterhouses and fishery industry, are given on a regular basis, preferably twice a day, to minimize stress. According to the NFBA report for 1999 only 43% of the farms showed good cleanliness. Only 5% of the farms had watering systems which were protected against freezing.

When females, both mink and fox, give birth, they are allowed to take care of their offspring for a relative long period which is positive according to their natural behaviour. For example weaning off mink kits, when the mother is taken away from the kits, is in generally between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> week after birth. Kits are usually pelted when they are 6 months old[25].

### 6.2 Physical condition and morbidity

Treatment of ear mites should be done regularly but the NFBA report for 1999 showed that it was only done on 59% of the Norwegian fox farms during the last year and on 23% 1 to 2 years ago. Also treatment of endoparasites was only done on 48% of the fox farms during the last year and on 23% 1 to 2 years ago. Measures for combating rats and mice were taken on 52% of the farms, while 40% used insecticides. Upon discovering diseases or wounds, 12% of

the Norwegian farmers regularly contacted a veterinarian, 28% regularly euthanised the animal and 52% used a combination of these. According to the NFBA report for 1999, visually observable health problems were found on 0,8% of the foxes; deformities on 0,4%, inflammation of the eyes on 0,2%, ear mites on 0,05%, diarrhea in 0,02%, and tooth problems in 0,03%.

### 6.3 Killing

Killing of the animals kept for fur production is almost always carried out on site. It is allowed to kill the mink with carbon monoxide, but because the Local/Health Inspectorate in Norway forbids the use of carbon monoxide [26], mink are killed with either carbon dioxide or by breaking their necks. When mink are killed by gas in a killing box, 30 to 50 mink may be placed in there, depending on box-size. Little use is made of individual boxes that are thought to be more acceptable. Although 100% carbon dioxide induces unconsciousness rapidly, lower concentrations are far less effective. 70% for example, fails to kill in less than 15 minutes. Interesting is that the European Committee Working Party on laboratory animals does not recommend its use for any carnivore, because of the behavioural distress it causes [25].

Foxes are electrocuted mainly in November and December. Electrodes are applied to the mouth and rectum and a current of an average value of 0,3 Ampere, 110 V, must be applied for at least 3 seconds. It is believed to induce unconsciousness immediately if the apparatus is used properly. When using this method the farmer would induce the current for 30 to 60 seconds then take a break of 15 seconds and induce the current again for 30 to 60 seconds. The initial current should ensure cardiac arrest and loss of brain function. The last induced current is just an extra precaution [25].

### 6.4 Ecology, behaviour and stress reduction

In the wild, mink (*Mustela vison*) occupy a wide variety of wetland habitats, including streams, rivers, lakes, freshwater and salt water marshes, and coast lines and mink are exclusive carnivores and prey on locally available food sources, with fish being not the most important prey [27]. Data on mating success, litter size, kit mortality in the wild are scarce to absent and therefore reproduction and mortality numbers in fur farms are difficult to interpret.

Mink are in general kept in wire-mesh cages with only access to a single nest box, drinking water and paste-like food. In the wild it patrol territories 1 to 4 km long, use several nest sites, and hunt by following scent trails, investigating burrows, and diving and swimming for aquatic prey [28]. Mason *et al.* (2001) [28] investigated to what extent captivity affects caged mink and found that these animals will release the 'stress' hormone cortisol when prevented from indulging in swimming, their favourite activity. Their experimental results showed that a high level of stress experienced by mink denied access to the pool, rated as the most valuable resource, was evidenced by an increase in cortisol production indistinguishable from that caused by food deprivation, suggesting that caging mink on fur farms does cause the animals frustration, mainly because they are prevented from swimming.

The red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) on the other hand, also occupies a variety of habitats and its distribution is widespread over most areas of the northern hemisphere, from Alaska and Northern Russian to the Middle East and eastern Africa. The red fox is known to have an opportunistic feeding strategy, living as a scavenger or hunter on a broad diet ranging from

small mammals, domestic animals to grasses and berries. In general the size of a red fox territory depends on climatic conditions, quality and abundance of food, available dens or suitable landscape for digging dens, water supply, suitable sites to rest or seek refuge, and the fox density. Territories found lay between 50 and 1000 ha, but also territories of 500 to 3400 hectare are known [29]. Female foxes give birth to 1 to 6 cubs and can reproduce yearly in the wild. It is said that 16 to 55% of the cubs die within the first 6 weeks, depending on abundance of food and density of the fox population.

The Arctic fox (*Alopex lagopus*) lives in coastal and inland arctic and mountainous tundra, in the arctic regions of Eurasia, North America, Greenland and Iceland. It is also an opportunistic feeder and its diet contains almost everything available from small rodents, large carcasses to grasses and berries. Mean home range sizes of 20 to 30 km<sup>2</sup> have been reported, but also ranges between 3 and 120 km<sup>2</sup> have been found [30]. Litter size varies according to abundance of food but ranges from 1 to 11 cubs per reproductive female, but few data exist on cub mortality.

Many studies have been carried out on stress reduction within farm foxes. Studies varied between the choices of farm foxes for different cage structures, floor materials, digging facilities and the effects of social housing and enlarged cage systems on the welfare of foxes. As most of the studies reveal, such captive enrichments have some beneficial effects on the performance- and welfare-related indicators in foxes [31,32,33], but large scale enrichment experiments with significant larger housing facilities, both with digging and shelter possibilities, food enrichments (e.g. chicken bones, hided food in sackcloth) have not been performed. Increased welfare will most likely be defeated by the economic constrains for fur farmers to realise these kind of enrichments.

The NFBA report for 1999 showed that on 11 of the 690 Norwegian fox farms all animals had access to activity objects (i.e. less then 0,02%), while on 37% some animals had this. Shelves or whole-year nest boxes were available for all foxes on 1,2% of the farms and for some foxes on 9,1%.

## 6.5 Domestication

According to the Norwegian fur industry fur animals are domesticated and therefore the animals should fall under the umbrella of the Norwegian department of agriculture and standards and procedures for keeping chicken, pigs and cows could be extended with standards and procedures for keeping fur animals. The Norwegian fur industry claims so to speak the same rights and treatment as applied within the industry of agriculture. The European science committee that carefully judged this statement of domestication, concluded that these fur animals, in comparison with other farm animals, have been subjected to relatively little active selection, except with respect to fur characteristics. There has thus been only a limited amount of selection for tameness and adaptability to captive environments and therefore these animals can not be regarded as domesticated [25].

Interesting is however that the Ethical Committee under the Norwegian Department of Agriculture released a statement already in 1994, that the farming methods employed today can not be justified and they should therefore be phased out [34]. The committee points out that fur farming involves predators with a limited degree of domestication placed in small, stimuli poor wire cages, where the animals do not receive any outlet for their natural behaviour, Even though the physical health condition of Norwegian fur animals is good, and mother and

offspring are allowed to stay together for a long time, stereotype behaviour, fright reactions and infanticide suggest that the animals are not suited to their environment.

## 5 Discussion

Opinions about fur farming can be very strong and controversial. On one side, fur farmers and trappers defend a business that moves billions of dollars every year and dresses millions of people worldwide with fur coats and smaller accessories. On the other side, the ideologies of animal rights associations can be so strong to induce the total ban of fur farming in a Country like England.

In 2003 in fact, the **British Government prohibited fur farming** because it offends the public morality. Even if the concepts of “moral” and “ethic” are not susceptible to absolute definitions, most people expressed a moral objection to the keeping of animals to exploit them solely or primarily for the value of their fur or for breeding progeny for such slaughter.

In theory similar considerations could be made for animal farming for food production, but in this case critics tend to be addressed mainly to the animal welfare rather than to the aim of producing meat. On the contrary in the case of fur farming, according to part of the society, the **aim** of producing a pure luxurious good for men’s vanity does not justify the keeping of animals in small cages and their consequently scarce welfare. Not only the public opinion is divided on this topic, but also the members of the Animal Ethics Council of Denmark, the world's largest producer of mink skins. In fact, their opinion about fur farming varies from “..fur farming is an animal husbandry that is to be evaluated on the same terms as any other animal husbandry” to “ the purpose of the production makes a great difference to the ethical evaluation”.

Not merely ethical objections have been addressed to fur farms. In fact the **law** in force at the European level, reinforced by the local Norwegian one, fail to provide clear definitions that are fundamental for its application. For instance, these laws are very vague when dealing with the concepts of animal “welfare”, “suffering”, “needs” or “necessary” pain. Hence, while on one side these laws set commonly acceptable principles about animal protection, they also leave wide margins for subjective interpretations. These margins are used both by fur farmers to justify their practice and by animal right associations to justify their opposition.

From a scientific point of view, it is hard to conclude that the farmed animals are kept “having regard to their physiological and ethological needs”, as stated by the Council Directive 98/58/EC. Both the members of the Danish Animal Ethics Council and the Danish fur farmers agree that there are a number of welfare problems in the fur animal production: while mink often shows **stereotypical behaviours**, foxes are **fearfulness**, since they usually withdraw and hide. Therefore, the practice of fur farming seems to be openly disrespectful toward the legislation in force. Still, it is an enormous business in Europe.

While only England at present banned fur farming, in the rest of Europe there are recommendations for the **improvement of animal welfare** inside the farms. In Norway, for instance, the Government could decide to ban fur farming if substantial improvements for the animal welfare will not be made within the next 10 years. Many studies have been carried out on stress reduction within farm animals. Studies varied between the choices of farm animals for different cage structures, floor materials, digging and swimming facilities and the effects of social housing and enlarged cage systems on the welfare of the animals. Such limited captive enrichments have some beneficial effects on the indicators of the performance and welfare in farmed animals. Anyway, large- scale enrichment experiments with significant larger housing facilities, both with digging and shelter possibilities, food enrichments (e.g.

chicken bones, hide food in sackcloth) have not been performed. Increased welfare will most likely be defeated by the economic constraints for fur farmers to realise these kind of enrichments.

In conclusion, fur farming is a big international business that employs more than one million of people and moves billions of dollars every year, even if it does not encounter the approval of great part of the society and does not fully respect the laws in force. Although England, historical pioneer of animal rights, banned fur farming, it is unlikely that the rest of the world will follow its example in the very near future. Anyway, according to the increasing attention on animal welfare from both the public opinion and the official organs, we believe that the **fur industry will not have a long future**.

If England banned fur farming on the ground of public morality, Norway and other Countries may, in the future, attain the same result by stopping or substantially reducing subsidies to fur farming. Probably, at first this will happen in Countries where the attention to ethical issues, as well as the respect of laws and institutions, is more relevant. But would this be a real victory for the animal rights? We believe that is likely that **Asiatic and American production centres**, where the concept of animal welfare has very different connotations and law is much more permissive, will expand and try to satisfy the world demand.

In conclusion, even though the end of fur farming is likely to happen in the medium-long term, we believe that scientists, politicians, and society should follow similar indications to the ones suggested by Russel and Burch in 1959 for the use of animals in research:

1. **Replacement:** use alternative materials instead of fur (synthetic products, wool, etc). In the market system, the demand creates the offer, and our personal choices have indirect effects on fur farming.
2. **Reduction:** we believe that the first step in order to close fur farming would be the drastic reduction of the number of farms, and this could be achieved through a drastic reduction of subsidies, where these occur. For instance, fur farming in Norway would face a severe crisis and would probably end in these circumstances. We do not support neither believe in the violent actions sometimes carried on by animal-right extremists. Threatening fur farmers or releasing farmed animals are immoral and illegal act that we condemn. Moreover, these actions have the opposite effect of creating public support for the animal farmers, decreasing the credibility of animal right associations, threaten the biodiversity and, finally, often provoke a cruel death for the released animals that are not able to survive in wild environments.
3. **Refinement:** provide a clear legal definition of animal welfare and seriously respect it. This means that the present conditions of detention of farmed animals have to be substantially improved. This process must be carried out on a national scale but on a global prospective, since the real aim is the improvement of animal welfare.

## 6 References:

1. Forskrift om hold av pelsdyr, 1998
2. <http://home.c2i.net/owaagen/noah/pelsdyrhefte.pdf>
3. <http://www.noahonline.org/pels/info>
4. "The fur inquiry", rapport fra World Society for the protection of animals, 1996
5. IFTF 2003, <http://www.iftf.com>
6. <http://www.nationaltrappers.com>
7. Finansdepartementet. 2003. *St.prp. nr. 1 (2003-2004). Den kongelige proposisjon om statsbudsjettet medregnet folketrygden for budsjetterminen 1. januar - 31. desember 2004.* Oslo.
8. Landbruksdepartementet. 2002. *St.meld. nr. 12 (2002-20039). Dyrehold og dyrevelferd.* Oslo.
9. Norges Pelsdyrslag. 2001. *Handlingsplan for dyrevelferd.* Oslo.
10. The legislation (acts and regulations) is acquired from [www.lovdato.no](http://www.lovdato.no).
11. "Fur farming", International Fur Trade Federation;
12. "The socio – economic impact of European fur farming", International Fur Trade Federation;
13. From EFBA pages at: <http://www.efbanet.com/economics.htm>;
14. <http://www.tdctrade.com>;
15. <http://peterpalms.com/catalog/fur/furranches.html>;
16. <http://www.noahonline.org/english/furinfo.htm>;
17. <http://www.iftf.com/today.asp>;
18. <http://montanatrappers.org/management/farming.htm>;
19. <http://www.furcommission.com/news/SP2y.htm>;
20. Balakirev, N. A. & Tinaeva, E. A. 2001. *Fur farming in Russia: the current situation and the prospects.* Scientifur, Vol 25, 1;

21. European Commission Health & Consumer protection directorate-general. 2001. *The Welfare of Animals Kept for Fur Production*. Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare. pp 1-211.
22. Dawkins, M.S. 1990. *From an animal's point of view: motivation, fitness and animal welfare*, Behav Brain Sci, 13:1-61.
23. Broom, D.M. 1993. *A useable definition of animal welfare*. J Agric Environ Ethics, 6, Suppl. 2:15-25.
24. <http://www.noahonline.org/english/furinfo.htm>
25. European Commission Health & Consumer protection directorate-general. 2001. *The Welfare of Animals Kept for Fur Production*. Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare. pp 1-211.
26. [http://www.information.com/investig/fash\\_vic/wspafa12.htm](http://www.information.com/investig/fash_vic/wspafa12.htm)
27. Dunstone, N.. 1993. *The mink*, T & AD Payser, London, UK.
28. Mason, G.J., Cooper, J. and C. Clarebrough. 2001 *Frustrations of fur-farmed mink*. Nature, 410:35-36.
29. Voigh, D.R.. 1988. *Red Fox*. In: Wild Furbearer Management and conservation in North America, 30, pp. 379-392.
30. Frafjord, K.. 1992. *Behavioural ecology and behavioural energetics in the arctic fox Alopex lagopus*. PhD. Thesis, University of Bergen.
31. Korhonen, H. and P. Niemelä. 1997. *Choices of farm foxes for raised wire mesh cage and ground pen*. Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 54:243-250.
32. Krohonen, H., Jauhiainen, L, Niemela, P., Harri, M. and R. Sauna-aho. 2001. *Physiological and behavioural responses in blue foxes (Alopex lagopus): comparisons between space quantity and floor material*. Animal Science, 72:375-387.
33. Ahola, L., Harri, M., Kasanen, S., Mononen, J. and T. Pyykonen. 2000. *Effects of group housing in an enlarged cage system on growth, bite wounds and adrenal cortex function in farmed blue foxes (Alopex lagopus)*. Animal welfare, 9:403-412.
34. [http://www.dyrevernalliansen.org/nyhet/n\\_07.php](http://www.dyrevernalliansen.org/nyhet/n_07.php)

## TOPICS OF DISCUSSION ABOUT FUR FARMING AND FUR TRAPPING

### *British Fur Association*

<http://www.britishfur.co.uk/farmbody.html#EU>

In 2000 there were 13 mink farms in the UK but following the adoption of the Fur Farming (Prohibition) Act in November 2000 mink farming was banned in the UK from the beginning of 2003. The Government justifies this law under article 30 – **“Public Morality” of the Treaty of Rome**. The Government introduced the ban on fur farming on the grounds that it allegedly offends ‘public morality’ **even though no-one knows what it means**, not even those in the Government who were responsible for the legislation. The agriculture minister told Parliament in July 2000 that ‘public morality’ is a "subjective notion" and that "public morality is not susceptible to an absolute definition". Earlier, the junior agriculture minister, in a press briefing at the launch of the Bill said that it was "theoretically possible" to ban anything on these grounds.

### *European Fur Breeder’s Association – Press Releases*

<http://www.furcommission.com/news/.htm>

March 18, 2002

... have found **no scientific evidence** that either factor (that farmed mink need to be able to swim, and that farmed foxes should be able to exercise an instinct to dig, not possible in wire-mesh cages) had a significant effect on the animals' **well-being or stress level**.

May 14, 1999

The European Fur Breeders' Association (EFBA) ... is solidly opposed to Labour MP Maria Eagle's Bill to ban fur farming in UK and is firmly behind the British Fur Trade Association's continued opposition to it. The Bill is fundamentally wrong in principle and in its fact, when it has been **scientifically proved that mink are fully domesticated** farm animals and **enjoy amongst the best** in farmed animal welfare standards. Fur farming as portrayed by Ms Eagle and her supporters simply bears no resemblance to reality. We consider it without precedent that in a **democratic society, emotional prejudice and misinformation** can be used as the basis for bringing about the end of such a successful and economically viable farming sector.

March 6, 1999

"The Government (UK) has made clear its intentions to end fur farming as soon as practicable," says Junior Agriculture Minister Elliot Morley (Daily Telegraph, Feb. 24). **“Why pick on mink?”** it asked (Feb. 26). **“There is no philosophical or moral difference between the killing of a cow for its leather and the killing of a mink for its pelt.** The Telegraph continued: "Maria Eagle claims her Bill has the backing of 74 per cent of the British public, as if that somehow justifies coercive legislation. Does this mean that the Government considers itself licensed to shut down any law-abiding business that falls foul of the polls? It is nothing less than **abuse of democratic power.**"

### *Comments on the Danish Animal Ethics Council's Report on Fur Animal Production*

[COPENHAGEN FUR CENTRE PRESS RELEASE](#)

January 24, 2003

...Some members find that it is unacceptable to use fur – and thereby fur animals – merely for **decoration or as a status symbol**, when so many other products can be used instead. However, all members of the Council agree that it is difficult to make a general definition, whether **people's needs are more or less luxurious**....In our society **we surround ourselves with products that are unnecessary**, and the definition of luxurious can therefore seem somewhat random. For instance, it is difficult to argue why fur should be more luxurious than meat, when in our parts of the world there are plenty of substitutes for both. And if you choose to include environmental considerations, fur may seem less luxurious than meat, as you can argue that fur is a more environmentally desirable product than synthetic materials and against the production of meat that has a negative impact on the environment and a poorer exploitation of land than plant production". Therefore, the Council finds that discussions on fur production must be divided into several levels, where you – if the logic of consistency is to be intact – first and foremost must

come to a principle decision, **if production of animals is acceptable**. In other words: Do you want to eat chops and wear leather shoes and fur coat; or are you a vegan (abstain from using animal products)? The members of the Council dissociate themselves from the so-called "**Disney-fying**", meaning that the entertainment business accredit farm animals human qualities. All members of the Council find it realistic to expect that **it is possible to meet the needs of farmed mink to an appropriate degree**. However, **some members consider that the production of fox cannot attain the same level in the foreseeable future**.

...5. **No study demonstrates that wire netting is a problem** to mink's paws, and in practice there are **no problems**.

...6. Researchers seems to agree that **mink have no essential need for swimming water...**

...8. Throughout many years farmers have selected against fearful animals and as a consequence **mink show no fear of humans**.

...11. There is **no scientific proof that foxes need to dig** in the ground. Testing has shown that **foxes do not even seem to prefer ground to wire**.

...18. **Nowhere in the world have escaped mink caused extermination of other species**.

### *Fur Commission Usa*

April 12, 2001. Special to FCUSA by Simon Ward

(The following article first appeared in the April 2001 edition of Fur Farm Letter, the monthly newsletter of Fur Commission USA, and is reproduced with permission.)

<http://www.maninnature.com/Management/ARights/Rights1h.html>

In return for a £100 million donation from animal rights groups, **Britain's Labour government has vowed to eliminate all animal use by humans**, and transform the land's remaining pastures into **yuppie bedroom communities**. **In the transition period from an omnivorous to a herbivorous society, all meat will be imported, "pre-killed"**, to comply with the ban on live transport of animals. **Lethal field sports will be phased out**, with the government providing **subsidies** for the production of clay pigeons, barbless fishing hooks, and drags scented with synthetic fox odour. **No drugs will be tested on animals in the UK, with unemployed vegans on welfare replacing beagles and rats**. Controversially, however, the government will help drug companies set up **temporary animal testing facilities in China** as insurance against a predicted drop in vegan unemployment. "To do otherwise," said the Home Secretary, "would be to put the health of Britons at risk."

Satire, yes, but not in the realm of fantasy!

"[W]hat is immoral ... is the idea that the animal rights groups can impose their views on people with those ideas being dominant over all others," said the International Fur Trade Federation. "That is what the British government has effectively done."

### *IFTF - International Fur Trade Federation*

<http://www.iftf.com>

Fur is an authentic, natural product, based on the **sustainable use of renewable resources**.

### **NATURE**

**Nature, 401, 418-419, 1999. doi:10.1038/46650 : Fur flies over rare-species panel**

[http://www.nature.com/cgi-taf/DynaPage.taf?file=/nature/journal/v401/n6752/full/401418b0\\_r.html](http://www.nature.com/cgi-taf/DynaPage.taf?file=/nature/journal/v401/n6752/full/401418b0_r.html)

David Spurgeon [Montreal]. **Canadian biologists and environmental groups are angry at what they claim are continued efforts by provincial and federal governments to politicize the process by which species are added to the endangered list**. In particular, they are worried at moves to give **representatives from private corporations (NB: fur corporations) direct involvement in the process**.

## ***PETA***

### [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals](#)

Fur card, 1/25/2000

Why do you call some animals “**pet**” and some animals “**pelt**”? Don’t let the cold penetrate your heart: refuse to wear fur or fur trim.

<http://www.furisdead.com/combacks.html>

“In the 21st century, people can choose to be cruel or kind. With so many fashionable, comfortable leather and fur alternatives available today, there is no excuse for wearing any animal skins. **We are not survivalists.**”

Slogan used in campaigns:

Fur: **You Choose, They Can’t**

Only animals should wear furs

Vogue, September 1989 by Ingrid Newkirk, Founder, PeTA

"We feel that animals have the same rights as a **retarded human child.**"

New York Magazine, November 7, 1994 by Dan Matthews, PeTA spokesman

"Pet ownership is an absolutely abysmal situation brought about by human manipulation."

Vivien Smith, ALF spokesperson

"I could understand anyone who was so angered and troubled by animal abuse that they were driven to **take a life.**"

Robin Webb, ALF spokesperson

"We recognise all animals on fur ranches as **political prisoners of the war on nature**, and shall strive to rescue them by any means necessary."

Rod Coronado, Newsletter, Yule 1991 Edition Vol.XII, No.2, 'Freedom for Fur Farm Prisoners'

"Launch your own campaign of **sabotage** against the fur industry...find a fur shop in your area and **smash** or etch its windows. Liquid steel ruins locks, bomb threats cost only a quarter. If you live in an area where furs are worn, fill a squirt bottle with red dye or battery acid and let fly. If you're presentable enough to go into a fur shop or department store, take a razor blade and slash the coats."

Rod Coronado, Newsletter, Yule 1991 Edition Vol.XII, No.2, 'Freedom for Fur Farm Prisoners'

"**The life of an ant and the life of my child should be granted equal consideration.**"

Michael Fox, Vice President, Inhumane Society, Fox Publication

## ***Fur Takers of America, Inc. (FTA)***

<http://www.furtakersofamerica.com/>

It is our duty as trappers of this decade to **preserve this great heritage and tradition** for the ones who will follow in our footsteps. By teaching these kids the proper ways of trapping and ethical trapping techniques we can make a difference in the future of trapping. Without educated trappers such as yourself to help them or show them, how will they ever learn or get started? I think all of us understand why this program is crucial to the existence of trapping in the future.

## ***Fur Commission, USA***

<http://www.furcommission.com/debate/index.html>

Animal rights advocates do not distinguish between human beings and animals. In the words of Ingrid Newkirk, founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA), "There is no rational basis for saying that a human being has special rights. A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy. They're all mammals." Michael Fox of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has said, "**The life of an ant and the life of my child should be accorded equal respect.**" Animal rights supporters reject all animal use, no matter how humane. Some animal rights advocates have even suggested that animal welfare reforms actually impede progress toward animal rights because they improve the conditions under which "animal exploitation" occurs, making it more difficult to stimulate public opposition to animal use.

The **animal welfare philosophy** is fundamentally different from the **animal rights philosophy**, since it endorses the responsible use of animals to satisfy certain human needs. These range from companionship and sport, to uses which involve the taking of life, such as for food, clothing and medical research. Animal welfare means ensuring that all animals used by humans have their basic needs fulfilled in terms of food, shelter and health, and that they experience no unnecessary suffering in providing for human needs. **Animal liberationists do not separate out the human animal, so there is no rational basis for saying that a human being has special rights.** A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy, they're all mammals.

### ***Montana Trappers***

<http://www.montanatrappers.org/management/farming.htm>

### ***ARE THE MINK AND FOXES ON FUR FARMS WILD ANIMALS?***

**No.** Mink and foxes have been raised on farms in North America since the turn of the century. They have been selectively bred for more than eighty generations for such characteristics as fur quality and color, but also for lameness, ease-of-handling and other traits. This is the same way our important breeds of cattle, poultry and other domestic livestock were **developed**. Farmed mink, notably, are considerably larger and have somewhat **higher reproductive rates** than their wild cousins. Needless to say, there are also important environmental influences which distinguish them from animals in the wild: day-to-day contact with the farmer who feeds them and the elimination of parasites, disease and predators. The majority of wild species used by the fur trade are not taken specifically for their fur, but as part of wildlife management programmes. These are necessary for the maintenance of biodiversity and healthy eco-systems, population and disease control and the protection of public lands and private property.

### ***Foxes & People***

<http://mynarskiforest.purrsia.com/ev32fur.htm>

**There's no easy answer regarding the ethics of the fur industry.** When one weighs animal cruelty and the environmental impact of fur farms against a human need for cultural preservation and jobs, it's very easy to get muddled. Add to that the fact that fur ranchers and trappers frequently hurl accusations of cruelty at one another, while comparing themselves to members of the much more respected meat industries and things become even more confused. Regardless of one's opinions, **it is a very emotional issue that is difficult to argue civilly and intelligently** (see how long you can maintain a thread on the subject on Usenet without it degrading into a flame war). **For my part, I simply choose not to buy the products offered.** It is the consumer who supports the ranchers, trappers and fashion designers, and despite spirited philosophical debate, it is ultimately the individual who will decide the fate of the fur industry.

## **SURVEYS**

### **IFTF (International Fur Trade Federation)**

<http://www.iftf.com>

In the USA, 86% of Americans support an individual's freedom to choose whether to wear fur. (1996)

69% of Finnish people have a positive attitude to fur farming. (1998)

In the UK, 62% of people consider that it is environmentally sound to use natural fibres such as wool, silk, fur and leather. (2000)

71% of Dutch people agree with the statement, "it makes in principle no difference for what reason you keep animals as long as you take care of their welfare". (2000)

67% of Dutch people believe individuals should have a free choice to wear fur. (2000)

67% of Scottish people strongly agree with the statement "in principle, I find it acceptable that animals are kept on farms for any purpose, provided there is good animal welfare." (2001)

68% of Canadians know that the fur trade helps to support the livelihoods and cultures of people living in close harmony with the land. (2001)

In Norway, two thirds of people support fur farming (Sentio Norsk statistikk/Nationen). (2003)

### **MORI SURVEY- ATTITUDE IN UK TOWARD FUR:**

[mori@mori.com](mailto:mori@mori.com)

A survey of the attitudes to fur in the UK, commissioned by Marie Claire and the RSPCA has revealed **that 87% of adults would never wear real fur**. Of these, 73% thought it wrong or disapproved, 12% said it is too expensive, 8% cited it unfashionable and 6% thought other people would disapprove.

When asked about the trapping of animals for their fur, 88% agreed that it should be banned with 76% saying fur farming should also be banned.

12% correctly identified the number of minks needed to make a full length fur coat as between 41-60. 19% thought between 1 to 20, 16% thought 21 to 40 and 32% thought it was over 60.

Respondents were also asked which, if any, of these statements about regulating the fur trade-unions world-wide they agreed with?

There should be no regulations imposed on the trade-unions in fur products: 4%

Trade in the fur of endangered species should not be allowed, but there should be no regulations on the trade-unions of fur of animals which are not endangered: 26%

Trade in fur should only be allowed if the animals are caught in a humane way: 24%

Trade in the fur of animals caught in the wild should not be allowed: 61%

Trade in the fur of animals reared on fur farms should not be allowed 50%

Countries should not import fur products if they think the animals used were treated cruelly: 55%

None of the above: 8%

Don't know: 2%

Note: MORI interviewed 1,946 adults aged 15+ in 173 sampling points throughout Great Britain on 20-23 June 1997. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in-home.