

Subject: In prep for Feb.6 PAW meeting- in support of Item No. 18-0538, by CM Blumenfield, Koretz, & O'Farrell to ban the manufacture and sale of fur products
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Good afternoon Los Angeles City Council Members Blumenfield, Koretz, O'Farrell, Smith, and Price:

[Animal Defenders International](#) (ADI) offers the following in preparation for your February 6th PAW Committee meeting, in support of [Item No. 18-0538](#), presented by Council Members Blumenfield, Koretz, and O'Farrell, to ban the manufacture and sale of certain fur products, beginning January 1, 2021. Our thanks to the sponsors for their work on this effort to bring Los Angeles in line with others, including West Hollywood, Berkeley, San Francisco, Denmark, the UK, the Netherlands, and the many fashion designers, including Michael Kors, Jimmy Choo, Versace, and Gucci, who have said no to fur industry cruelty.

ADI investigations reveal nightmarish standard industry practices, where animals' miserable lives in cramped, filthy cages abruptly end by electrocution (to their anus or genitals), suffocation, broken necks, or worse - some are still conscious and breathing even after they've been skinned. And though leghold traps were declared inhumane by the American Veterinary Medical Association, and are banned in Los Angeles and the state of California, they remain a common kill method in the US fur industry. I include here for your consideration, ADI's 2017 reports and a [link to videos of one of ADI's investigations](#) into this terrible industry. It's time to end this horrific practice.

We hope this informs your review and we urge your yes vote on [Item No. 18-0538](#), to bring it to the full Council; we remain available as well, to assist with additional data or testimony in support of this effort.

Many thanks for your time and consideration.

All my best regards,

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Bloody Harvest

The real cost of fur

A study of the intensive fur industry



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Bloody Harvest. The real cost of fur

A study of the intensive fur industry

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With thanks to Oikeutta Eläimille

1. Taking Responsibility

There has been enormous controversy over the wearing of animal fur in recent decades, but as the evidence mounts of the cruelty and suffering involved, it is becoming clear that the breeding and killing of wild animals for their fur is unethical. Animals bred on intensive fur farms suffer terribly; their short, miserable lives spent in squalid surroundings full of fear and distress, suffering injuries, infection and deformities.

Some of the most popular species of animals farmed for their fur are mink and fox, yet neither species has been domesticated over centuries to adapt them to living in proximity to humans, or to each other, as with domesticated farm animals such as cows and sheep. These are wild animals: they retain all of their wild instincts and needs. Claims that their nature has been changed or behavioural needs modified by captive breeding over a few generations are false and unscientific. They are shy and fearful of humans and other animals; thus, their mental and emotional suffering is compounded in an intensive farming environment.

Those who wish to wear animal fur must therefore take responsibility for the way in which the product they are wearing is produced. The animals killed to produce these items of clothing are kept in tiny, wire mesh cages and suffer from injuries and physical deformities, as well as behavioural abnormalities indicative of psychological damage, indicators that the animals cannot cope with the environment in which they find themselves.

- Up to 15-20 foxes suffer and die to make a fur coat
- Up to 60-80 mink suffer and die for a mink coat

Despite public education campaigns exposing the cruelty and suffering involved in the wearing of fur, some designers are choosing to use this unethical product in their collections. Yet there is a wealth of substitute materials that can replicate the appearance of fur, reflecting the beauty of the natural world.

Designers especially, must take responsibility for the unnecessary suffering caused by their choice of product. At the very least, any designer wishing to use fur should inspect the conditions of the animals being bred and killed for the product they desire. There is no excuse for accepting the assurances of industry at face value – this is an issue of personal responsibility – the designer is creating demand for a product that causes millions of animals to suffer horribly, and die an excruciating death.

This report covers a seven month study of the conditions in a random sample of 30 sites in Finland, producing mink and fox skins for the worldwide fur industry. Of Finland's circa 1100 fur farms¹⁶², this figure represents a statistically relevant sample. The Finnish Fur Breeders' Association claims that 47 per cent of Finland's pelt production comes from certified farms, and that 25 per cent of Finnish fur farms have been certified. Thus, of this sample, it would be expected that several of the facilities would be certified.



Wild, free Arctic fox.



A young fox cub looks up from the corner of its cage.

Certification:

The aim of the Finnish intensive fur farm certification programme is to provide reassurance to consumers, public and the authorities that pelts come from a farm operating in accordance with animal protection and welfare criteria demanded by legislation¹²⁵. *"The farm certification programme provides added assurances, because consumers want to know the origin of the product and be assured of the ethics behind it"*¹²⁶.

The scheme also advocates "transparency". It is, therefore, hoped that our candid appraisal will be welcomed by industry.

The Finnish Fur Breeders' Association certification brochure claims: *"Clean farm surroundings contribute to the welfare and comfort of both the animals and the fur producer."* And, *"The basis for all measures is individual care and the monitoring of all animals, while special attention is paid to animal welfare throughout the entire production chain"*¹²⁶.

Of their standards of animal protection and welfare, the Finnish Fur Breeders' Association website provides consumers and public with even more far reaching assurances:

"All fur animals in Finland are bred in a manner honouring their well-being. Today's care and breeding methods are based on extensive experience and fur-industry research. For decades, we have studied the breeding conditions, behaviour, and well-being of fur animals as well as the environmental issues connected with fur farms and the composition of the feed used at the farms. We continuously study and develop means of addressing issues connected with fur animals' space and stimulation needs as well as all issues associated with the environment, in order to offer living conditions as good for the animals as possible."

"In Finland, the care and breeding of fur animals and feed manufacturing are of a high standard."

"Taking care of the well-being of animals is the basis for the breeding of all domesticated animals. On Finnish fur farms, the animals are carefully and professionally cared for."

"The authorities monitor compliance with the legislation by, for example, conducting annual animal welfare and hygiene inspections. In these inspections, the following issues are studied: the pen sizes and the number of animals in each pen, the material from which the base mesh has been manufactured, the escape-security of open-sided sheds, the materials from which the water cups have been manufactured, how water is provided for the animals, how the animals are put down, what kind of shelves and nest boxes the animals have, whether chewing sticks are used, and how carcasses are handled."

These assertions were put to the test. Observations were made of housing and animal care, animal health and welfare issues; over seven hours of video recordings were taken, together with one and a half thousand photographs.

Our conclusion is that not one of the farms could be said to reasonably reflect the assurances being given by the Association, and some of the injuries were horrifying.

Findings included animals with open and infected wounds, eyes infected or missing, tails bitten off, deformed legs, overgrowing gum disease resulting in difficulty eating and drinking, babies with legs stuck through the mesh floor of the cage, dilapidated caging and facilities, animal suffering and neglect.

Specific incidents of deficits in animal care reported here include:

- Obvious signs of untreated infection or disease in animals' eyes, noses and ears.
- Foxes with visible gum masses, sometimes entirely engulfing the teeth.
- Open wounds, loss of tails.
- Malformed limbs.
- Dilapidated cages with sharp wire and mesh protruding into animals' living space, likely to cause injury.
- Empty, unclean and broken water bowls.

What is more difficult to depict in such a study is the long-term mental suffering of animals kept for breeding. It might be argued that young animals killed for their pelts do not suffer from the extended periods of environmental deprivation experienced by the breeding adults, as they are killed within a few months of birth. However, the footage and photographs make it clear that all of the animals can and do suffer terribly. All for an unnecessary product for which alternatives are available.

This issue cannot be compared with the eating of meat, as some furriers have claimed. The animal welfare issues are distinctly different. There is no excuse for supporting an industry which causes such extreme suffering.



The cages are, at best, cramped and with little or no enrichment.

Worldwide, approximately 50 million animal fur pelts are produced annually^{163, 164}:

Finland is one of the world's four main fur producing countries and the largest producer of bluefox pelts^{1,166}. Between 2007 and 2008, total sales of fur amounted to €325.7 million, with nearly 9.5 million pelts being sold². In 2007, Finland reported 411,000 breeding foxes, which produced 987,000 cubs¹²¹; annual pelt production is approximately 4 million a year^{132,133, 134,165}. Thus, Finland produces about 8%, or 1/12th of the world's annual pelts.

This is a wealthy industry, yet it appears that none of this wealth has been invested back into animal welfare.

International Action on Intensive Fur Farming

Increasingly, governments around the world are responding to the evidence of the inevitable suffering that this industry causes, as well as the widespread public concern about both the cruelty and the environmental impact of intensive fur farms:-

- England and Wales established a ban on fur farming in November 2000, followed by the introduction of a ban in Scotland in October 2001¹³⁵.
- Austria was the first EU member state to ban fur farming when 9 regions introduced bans during the 1990s. The last mink farm closed in June 1998¹³⁵.
- In the Netherlands, fox and chinchilla farming have been banned since 1995 and 1997 respectively¹³⁵. In June 2009 the lower house of the Dutch Parliament adopted a ban on mink farming which is progressing through the upper house of the Parliament¹³⁶.
- Croatia's 2006 Animal Protection Act prohibits the rearing of animals for fur production¹³⁷.
- In Israel, a proposal to extend the law against fur production, manufacture, import, export and sale to cover all animals has recently been approved, following an earlier decision to ban dog and cat furs. This has some religious exemptions¹³⁸.
- The European Union has banned the use of leg-hold traps for wild animals, as well as the import of pelts from animals that have been caught with leg traps¹³⁹.

2. Natural behaviour and lifestyle of foxes and mink

2. Natural behaviour and lifestyle of foxes and mink

By considering the natural lifestyle and environment of fox and mink and comparing this with the conditions on intensive fur farms the level and extent of suffering caused, or likely to be caused, can be established.

Both fox and mink are naturally shy and secretive animals. They will often have large territories and generally act as solitary hunters. Mink are fiercely territorial and semi aquatic, and would naturally spend much of their time in water. Both instinctively avoid human contact, and academic studies have shown that they are fearful of humans on intensive farms.

In America and Europe mink inhabit a variety of wetlands including streams, rivers, lakes, freshwater and salt water marshes and coastlines¹⁴⁰. Mink are mostly active in, or within 100-200m of water. A study cited by Broom and Nimon using radio tracking reported that both sexes swam around 250m almost daily and sometimes twice a day. A large proportion of a wild mink's diet is derived from aquatic sources. *"It seems clear that swimming and diving are a highly significant aspect of the mink lifestyle"* ^{141,142}.

The footage of mink on these farms does not show any access to water. Indeed in these conditions the water would freeze in low temperatures anyway and therefore not be accessible to the animals. Instead, they exist in cramped barren cages, with no way to express their natural swimming and foraging behaviours. Not being able to express natural, wild behaviour is a well known source of frustration in captive animals.

Two species of fox are bred for fur; the silver fox, a variety of the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), and the blue fox, a variety of the Arctic fox (*Alopex lagopus*)³. Foxes are shy, secretive animals, cover is important to them and therefore in open country they live below ground. Arctic foxes dig dens deep in the snow, surviving conditions as cold as -50°C ⁴. Foxes establish home ranges, which can vary from 400 to 1600ha; in the Arctic, their home territory may be as large as 3000ha³.

Foxes are opportunistic feeders, consuming small mammals, fish, bird eggs, grass, invertebrates, berries and fruits. When there is surplus food, foxes will cache it in small holes, disguised under earth and twigs⁵. Arctic foxes also eat seaweed and seal placentas⁵.

A female fox will find a dry, protected area such as an earth den to give birth to her cubs, typically four to six babies^{3,5}.



Arctic fox in its natural environment.



Neck tongs used for catching foxes.



A fox stands over the body of its dead cage mate.

3. Animal health and welfare

Newborn cubs lack locomotor, visual and auditory skills and only fully open their eyes and ears at 11-20 days of age. Importantly, they cannot regulate their own body temperature. Nursing is initiated when the female calls the pups out of the den, or when pups nuzzle her belly⁶.

It is clear that the small spaces and exposed conditions on a fur farm do not allow these animals to express their normal behaviours; such environmental deprivation is known to cause distress, resulting in psychological and behavioural damage. Given the circumstances – close confinement, wire mesh cages open to the environment, it is inevitable that these animals will suffer terribly.

3. Animal health and welfare

3.1 Foxes are wild animals

Species of animal farmed for their fur are not domesticated and have the same needs as their wild counterparts. Studies have concluded, *“Generally, in comparison with other farm animals, species farmed for their fur have been subjected to relatively little active selection except with respect to fur characteristics”*⁵. The result is that ***“the less fearful genetic strains are not being used commercially, and farmers are not necessarily devoting the substantial amount of time which is needed for handling of all their foxes. As a consequence, fear of humans is a major and very widespread welfare problem on fox farms”***⁵.

3.2 Health and welfare of animals

Anyone reading this report and watching the video can clearly see that the animal cages have wire floors and sides. Shelves, where present, have frequently collapsed⁷, wire may be broken⁸, protruding⁹ and rusted¹⁰ causing a hazard likely to injure the animal.

Water dispensers were sometimes empty¹¹, filled with rancid, green water¹², fur¹³ or broken and flooding¹⁴. On one occasion, the water bowl itself had broken off and was in the cage⁷. Food was seen spread onto cages which frequently appeared to be dirty and encrusted with old fur¹⁵. The overall appearance of the farms and the cages was one of dilapidation¹⁶ and neglect¹⁷.

In addition to general disrepair, most cages contain no enrichment. ‘Enrichment’ where it exists, is typically a block of wood¹⁸ or empty hollow bone¹¹.

A scientific study on the welfare of farmed foxes expressed concerns and questioned, ***“have foxes the capacity to adapt fully to farm conditions and, hence, can their welfare be good on farms?”***³. It is noted that farmed foxes *“are almost always kept in small, barren, contiguous cages with no physical enrichment other than a wooden nest box when whelping and sometimes a wire mesh platform. They live in a largely static social environment, determined haphazardly. They have no opportunity to adjust their distance or take shelter in relation to aversive stimuli such as the presence of conspecifics or humans”* inevitably ***“There is clear evidence that the welfare of farmed foxes in the typical bare, wire-mesh cages is very poor”***³.

Aside from the dilapidated and potentially dangerous cages we have seen, the animals themselves are often in a pitiful state. Some have tails missing; one tail stump was red, raw and protruding¹⁹. There were dead animals in their cages^{20,21} one of which had been eaten by its cage mate²² and one cub had been dead long enough for maggots to be present²³. As the mother sniffed the body, a wound on her shoulder and a bald, raw patch behind one of her withered ears were clearly visible²⁴.

Whilst it could be argued that some injuries or incidents (other than a corpse with maggots) could happen within a few hours and are therefore beyond the control of the farmer, other conditions have clearly been present for prolonged periods of time, possibly months.

Observations and recordings included animals with grossly distorted mouths, which they are unable to close^{25,26}; infected, weeping eyes^{27,28} often to the extent that it is unclear whether the animal’s eye is still there²⁹. Some animals were also suffering from a condition where their ears have become withered and deformed^{9,30}, so much so that one animal appeared to have no ears³¹. A familiar sight was also foxes with abnormal limbs, standing awkwardly on the mesh floor of their cages, limbs bent in extreme directions, not showing the typical “tip toed” stance of their species^{32,33,34}.

3. Animal health and welfare

3.2.1 Genetic / hereditary diseases

Eyes

As mentioned earlier, many animals had discharge from one or both eyes. One fox cub had clouding in both eyes with the eyeballs appearing swollen³⁵; whether it could see was not clear. Another animal had such an infected / injured eye, it was impossible to see if the eye was still present³⁶. These eye conditions may be worsened by the animals' dirty cages and the fact that some animals have excessively long claws^{37,38}, which would exacerbate the irritation if they scratch their eyes.

These clearly distressing conditions may be due to entropion, which is described as *"A complex genetic condition that results in the turning in of the upper or lower eyelid, potentially resulting in corneal ulceration"*³⁹. This is relevant because *"Entropion has been observed usually in heavy individuals among blue foxes during the winter season. It causes conjunctivitis in the affected eye(s). This disorder, which in some respects seems to be hereditary, has until now not been studied systematically. The farmers had been advised not to use these individuals for breeding"*⁵. However, even if these animals are not used for breeding, the animals are experiencing eye problems and will undoubtedly suffer.

Mouth Disease

Some of the animals appeared to be suffering from a disease called gingival hyperplasia (extreme overgrowth of gums), a condition that is seen in some breeds of domesticated dog. Some had clearly suffered this disease for a considerable length of time, as the extent of the overgrown tissue was so extreme that they were unable to close their mouths – this would cause problems with both eating and drinking^{40,41}. See case study box opposite.

This is not a new problem: ***"Since the 1940's, farmed foxes have been observed to exhibit an inherited gum condition called hereditary hyperplastic gingivitis (HHG) which is associated with long, thick fur"***⁴². This condition *"eventually inhibits normal functioning and presents an animal welfare and economic concern"*⁴³.

The gum grows up the crown of the tooth and also thickens. This can affect the ligaments and the bones of the jaw, so the problem must be addressed. If it is not, then the enlargement of the tissue can become extreme. *"In advanced cases, the patient cannot close his/her mouth without chewing on the redundant/hyperplastic tissue. Even before this occurs, chewing on food and treats may cause the loose flaps of gingiva to be traumatized. The result of this trauma – pain!"*⁴⁴

With time, the condition *"can actually result in the movement of teeth, sometimes all but pulling teeth out of their sockets"*, therefore, experts have advised that *"the condition definitely needs treatment"*⁴⁴.

3.3 Housing

As mentioned earlier, many of the cages filmed during the investigation were covered with fur and debris⁴⁵; some had



This fox has noticeable issues with the eyes and mouth.



Example of the raw, exposed stump of a missing tail.



Example of the build up of discharge in and around the eyes.

Examples of poor health and welfare.



The same animal, over 13 weeks later.

Animal case study: Long suffering male fox

From the state of the animals' health, it is clear that many easily-recognised conditions had not received attention. One male fox was filmed on three separate occasions. In the first instance, the animal is clearly severely affected by a disorder causing his head to tilt awkwardly to one side⁶¹. His eyes are affected, as well as his mouth, and both are exuding fluids. He also has extremely overgrown claws and one withered ear. On the second visit, almost 4 weeks later, the animal was in the same terrible state, if not in slightly poorer health, and being bothered by flies¹²³. Just over 13 weeks later he was seen, still in a poor state, with his head held at an odd angle, stained fur around his mouth and throat and diseased ears¹²⁴.



Example of abnormal posture involving the feet.

Animal health: Injuries and limb deformation linked to housing conditions

As a result of the cramped housing, animals appeared to have suffered injuries from other cage mates with whom they were confined. These included missing ears⁵², missing tails with raw, exposed stumps⁸⁵ and open wounds on various parts of the body¹³.

As a result of the nature of the mesh netting, many of the animals displayed an abnormal posture when walking. Foxes would normally walk on their toes, but the farmed foxes were often walking with their feet flat on the floor (back of the foot on the cage floor)^{54,9}, indicating an attempt to make moving around on mesh more comfortable for their feet.

One particular animal appeared to have suffered a broken leg. This injury had either not been, or was inadequately attended to; it had healed, leaving the animal with a withered and twitching foot⁵⁶.



Example of overgrown gum tissue engulfing the teeth.

Animal health: Eye, mouth infections

Infection was a widespread problem, affecting animals of all ages and species.

Eye problems: Many of the animals appeared to be suffering from eye problems. One condition involved swollen and misty eyes. Another caused the eyelids to turn in, resulting in weeping eyes and ulceration¹²². Symptoms observed included constant blinking⁹⁶, opaque eyes³⁵ and pus around the eyes². In some cases the animal's eye had produced so much discharge that the fur around the eye and down the face was encrusted⁷⁵. It is likely that many of these animals suffered visual impairment as a result.

Mouth infection: The occurrence of oral masses were seen in foxes to varying degrees of severity. The overgrowth of gum tissue, which can be managed in domestic dog species, had been left to develop to a horrendous level in some animals. In one fox, the problem had advanced to the extent that huge masses protruded from the top and bottom jaws, entirely engulfing the animal's teeth, clearly causing eating and drinking difficulties⁴⁰.

3. Animal health and welfare

broken, protruding wires presenting an injury hazard to the animals⁴⁶. Furthermore being in captivity, especially in such tiny cages, causes these animals mental and physical harm.

3.3.1 Bald tail patch

Many foxes were seen to have a white patch at the base of their tails^{47,48}, this could indicate an earlier disease or injury.

One study described a condition in mink *“Psychogenic alopecia, sometimes resulting from excessive self-grooming, has been linked with stress in a range of species. Mink with patches of shortened or absent fur, especially on the tail, exist on every farm. Careful observation has shown this to be caused by animals sucking or biting themselves. The fur on the lower hind part of the back, and/or the tail, may be clipped short, and the tail may even be bald, apparently sucked clean of fur”*⁵.

It is possible that the patches on foxes' tails were caused by tail biting earlier in the animal's life as some tail patches appeared to have healed²¹ and some tail patches are clearly fresh wounds⁴⁹.

3.3.2 Abnormal behaviour

Abnormal, repetitive behaviours are often referred to as 'stereotypic' behaviour by animal behaviourists. This is where an animal spends long periods of time repeating a movement or abnormal activity and is an indicator that the animal is stressed; it is unable to cope with its environment.

Some animals observed in this study displayed abnormal or frustrated behaviour, repeating the same movement, with no obvious purpose⁵⁰. Behavioural problems included an animal walking repeatedly in circles around the cage⁵¹, and some more severe behaviour, for example, foxes were seen frantically jumping around the cage, darting from one corner to the other^{52,53}.

These animals can show signs of mental disturbance. Currently, studies on farmed animals have concluded: *“The extent of stereotyped behaviour in farmed foxes is not adequately documented”*³. And, *“Since foxes may show stereotypies when humans are not present but cease when humans are present, failure to observe stereotypies does not mean that they do not occur”*⁵.

3.3.3 Abnormal stances, locomotion and limbs

Many foxes had limbs that were clearly abnormal. Instead of standing on the tips of their toes, as foxes usually do, a stance known as 'digitigrade', they were bearing weight on the whole sole of their foot^{54,9}, which is known as 'plantigrade'. There is little scientific literature on limb problems in farmed canids, as *“Conformation problems, especially plantigrade instead of digitigrade locomotion, have apparently received little if no attention”*⁵. The problem could be due to the animals' genetics or to the mesh cage floor that the animals must stand and lie upon for the whole of their lives. The size of the mesh holes may have caused the animals to walk in this atypical fashion, as they try to make movement around the cage more comfortable; limb distortion may have occurred over time.

A study of fox physiology with varying cage size and floor type found that bending of the front foot tended to occur more often on a mesh floor than an earth floor. Furthermore, smaller cages caused more animals to have bent feet⁵⁵.

The European SCAHAW (Scientific Committee on Animal Health And Animal Welfare) report concludes its section on the welfare of farmed foxes with the following statement regarding fox caging ***“In particular, it imposes monotony of the physical environment, restricts physical exercise and species-specific behaviour such as digging. In relation to the lack of physical exercise, limb bones are significantly weaker than those of foxes kept in large cages where more exercise occurs”***. The same section states the occurrence of *“locomotor problems in heavy blue foxes, and entropion in blue foxes”*⁵.

One fox in this investigation appeared to have suffered an injury to a back leg, leaving the individual with an extremely atrophied, unusable limb – it was almost unrecognizable as a foot. He was unable to walk correctly and had a red, sore patch on his foot, probably from the compromised way in which he had to move, shuffling across his cage. At one point this distorted, malformed foot appeared to twitch uncontrollably⁵⁶.

3.3.4 Cannibalism and tail biting

Some foxes had lost their tails. Where this loss was recent, the animal had a red, raw protruding stump¹⁹. The animals' pain can only be imagined, especially if the fox that bit off the tail repeatedly worries at the injury. In one cage, two animals were seen to be lacking their tails⁵⁷. *“The killing and injury of cubs (tail removal, biting) by their mothers has been reported as a common problem on fox farms, and yet comparatively few studies have examined this issue”*³.



Rows of wire mesh cages.



This fox's face is distorted by an open, infected wound; a not uncommon sight in the fur farms visited by the investigators.

4. Breaches of national and international regulations

One red fox had a deep open wound on the back of its neck⁵⁸. Additionally, a mink was seen that appeared to have lost its ear, leaving a recent, open wound⁵⁹. One fox was dead and had been partially eaten by its cage mate²².

The SCAHAW report discusses findings from another study, regarding infanticide in foxes and how it is an *“important welfare problem for the cubs because of their likely high sensitivity to pain. A clear relation between infanticide and tail-biting of the cubs was described. Infanticide frequently started with tail biting, and some vixens only bit tails in some years and killed offspring in other years”*⁵.

3.3.5 Long claws

A recent scientific paper reported on the effects of the provision of sand floor for juvenile blue foxes (*Vulpes lagopus*) and its affect on their physiology⁶⁰. The paper found that more claw breakages occurred in the group of foxes which were given a mesh floor and that animals which were given sand had *“better mass and overall quality of furs”*.

The authors found *“The slightly better mass and overall quality of furs in the Sand group foxes might suggest that the Sand group foxes could afford to invest their resources in fur development and growth during their early lives, that is, from August onwards, whereas the Control group foxes were investing more of their resources in coping”*⁶⁰.

Long claws can cause problems as they *“can become caught in the mesh of the cage and break, exposing the foxes to digit inflammations [sic] which impacts on both the functioning-based and feelings-based welfare of the animals”*⁶⁰.

3.3.5 Possible neurological disorders

Some foxes were clearly in a deplorable state of health, but the cause of this suffering was unclear. One individual, a male, held his head tilted with his right eye uppermost. This eye was severely red and inflamed, the other was almost completely closed, and his left ear was also withered. His body, under the thick coat was thin, making his head and limbs appear too large. He turned slowly in circles, sniffing the air. The underside of his muzzle was discoloured with saliva and his rear legs were used abnormally, stand on the whole bottom part of the limb (plantigrade)⁶¹.

Another example is a cub in a very poor state of health. He was a lot smaller than his cage-mates and sat with his head held at an abnormal angle and appeared to be pre-occupied and agitated. His front limbs were very distorted and his cage mates were walking over the top of him. He seemed oblivious. His limbs were so distorted that when he sat down, his stomach appeared to be touching the floor⁶².

4. Breaches of national and international regulations for the protection of animals

The farms studied in this investigation are required to abide by laws put in place by the Finnish government. In addition European Union (EU) regulations for the protection of farmed animals, including those farmed for fur, cover illness, injury and poor health; feeding and watering; animal housing/cages; satisfying the animal's natural behavioural needs.

The relevant national legislation is Finland's Animal Welfare Act (247/1996)⁶³, which sets out to protect animals from distress, pain and suffering and to promote the welfare and good treatment of animals. In addition, Decree no. 16/VLA/1999 on the matter of Animal Protection Requirements Regarding the Keeping of Furred Animals⁶⁴ applies. This, more specifically, contains provisions which aim to protect furred animals from suffering and pain. Another relevant decree which makes the provisions in the Animal Welfare Act more specific to this case, is Animal Welfare Decree (396/1996)⁶⁵.

In the EU, furred animals are covered under EU Council Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes⁶⁶. The measures in this directive are based on past experience and present scientific knowledge.

4.1 Illness, injury and poor health

The illness and injuries described earlier appear to breach animal protection legislation, for example:

- Animals whose injuries or diseases were advanced, therefore appropriate care had either not been obtained, or has been inadequate
- Animals with injuries or open wounds; missing tails; open sores
- Abnormal or malformed limbs, abnormal gait; apparently broken limbs
- Swollen, overgrown gums preventing drinking and eating; clearly developed over a long period of time

Examples of breaches of national and international regulations

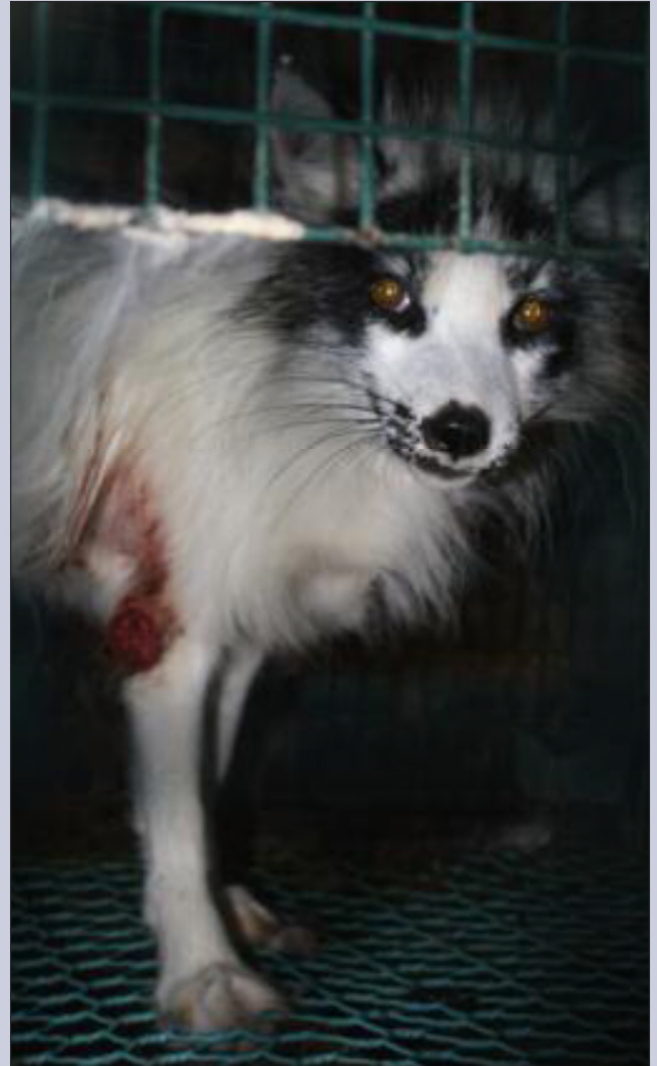
4.1 Illness, injury and poor health:



The spine of this dead animal is prominent, a possible indicator of prolonged poor condition prior to death.



This fox's claws are overgrown, and its ears are withered. These signs are unlikely to have appeared over a short time span.



A bloody wound on the elbow joint.

- Injured, infected, missing eyes
- Overgrown claws
- Dead animals covered in maggots

These instances are clearly covered by the legislation. For example:

- When an animal falls ill, appropriate care must be obtained without delay. The welfare and conditions of the animal must be checked often enough^{143, 144, 145}
- Where an animal does not respond to care, veterinary advice must be obtained as soon as possible¹⁴⁵.
- The animals' claws shall be clipped as required¹⁴⁶.

4. Breaches of national and international regulations

4.2 Feeding and watering

- Animals without sufficient drinking water
- Dry bowls / watering systems broken, overflowing, not running
- Apparently broken water supply
- Dirty water bowls, contaminated with algae and fur
- Broken water bowl, with pieces on floor
- Methods of feeding that do not take account of the animals' nutritional needs.
- Food pumped out and shared in a cage
- Overall conditions indicate that animals are not checked regularly and are therefore neglected

These instances are clearly covered by the legislation, for example:

- The animal must be able to obtain suitable food, drink and other necessary care in sufficient quantities and of good quality^{147,148}.
- The needs of each animal must be taken into account in feeding and it must be ensured that each animal gets enough nutrition and must be appropriate to their age and species^{148,149}.
- Drinking and feeding vessels shall be such as not to cause injuries to the furred animals¹⁵⁰. The animals shall have daily access to an adequate amount of clean water. The animals' drinking vessels and watering systems shall be kept clean^{151,152}.
- Such equipment essential for the animals' health and well-being must be inspected at least once daily. Where defects are discovered, these must be rectified immediately¹⁵³.

4.3 Animal housing/cages

- Small cages, made of wire mesh, do not take the needs of the animals into account
- Cages littered with faeces, fur, and dirty
- Little or no environmental enrichment
- Damaged and broken cages with sharp protruding ends, likely to injure
- Small cubs in cages with wire mesh too large for their feet, resulting in legs dropping through cage floor

Examples of breaches of national and international regulations.

4.2 Feeding and watering:



Example of poor feeding methods.



Example of inadequate water supply.

- Cages with young cubs, no 'lair' or 'nest'; lack of bedding for young animals
- Collapsed shelves

These instances are clearly covered by the legislation, for example:

- The animal premises must have sufficient space and lighting and it must be protective, clean and safe as well as appropriate in other respects taking account of the needs of each animal species¹⁵⁴.
- The cage material and construction should be such that they do not cause danger to the animal's health or well being. The cages shall not have such edges and projecting parts as can injure the animals. If the bottom of the cage is of netting or perforated material, it shall be suited to the species in respect of the animal's size, age and weight^{155,156,157}.
- Foxes shall have a suitable lair for whelping and care of the cubs. In fox cages there shall be a shelf at a suitable height on which the animal can lie in a natural position. The furred animals' lairs shall be spacious enough for the animals to be able to rest in a natural position¹⁵⁸.

4.4 Satisfying the animals' natural behaviour.

- The physiological and behavioural needs of the animals are not taken into account in the design of the cages. By comparing the natural behaviour of foxes in the wild and these foxes in Finland's fur farms it is apparent that these animals are suffering extremely deprived environments, where they are unable to cope, and this causes great suffering.
- Disturbed, abnormal behaviour is present, indicative of psychological damage.
- Problems identified include abnormal and frustrated behaviour that is sometimes severe and possible cannibalism, as partially eaten bodies were observed.
- Most of the adults display an abnormal gait; rather than walking on the tops of their feet in the normal way (digitigrade) they move with a larger area of their foot on the ground. In comparison to the natural movement of foxes in the wild, the locomotive behaviour of these animals is obviously compromised.

These instances are clearly covered by the legislation, for example:

- Maintaining the health of animals must be promoted in the keeping of animals and the physiological and behavioural needs of the animals must be taken into account¹⁵⁹.
- Particular attention shall be given to any possible behavioural problems that ensue from the establishment of new social relationships¹⁴⁶.
- The premises must have enough space considering the specific needs of each animal species and must not be restricted in a way which causes unnecessary suffering. The animal must be capable of standing and resting in a natural position as well as moving about in the premises^{160,161}.

Examples of breaches of national and international regulations.

4.3. Animal housing/cages:



The dead body of a fox, having been partially eaten by its companions.



The mesh floor of this cage is too large for the cubs' feet, causing their legs to fall through the holes.



The wire mesh shelf in this cramped cage is twisted and broken; a potential cause of injury.

5. Killing

5. Killing

The issue of how intensively farmed fur animals are killed at the end of their lives, whilst an important element of their whole life experience, is not covered in detail here. This report focuses on the animal care and management issues, however below is a summary of the killing:

The method of slaughter is dependant upon the species being killed and includes some horrific practices such as gassing, electrocution through the anus and mouth and, for smaller animals, breaking their necks.

"The traditional way of stunning farmed foxes is whole body stunning". For this method the fox is immobilised by the neck and tail whilst a metal rod is inserted into the anus and the mouth, and an electrical current applied¹¹⁷. The European Fur Breeders Association recommends that the application of electrical current should last at least 3 seconds¹¹⁸.

The American Veterinary Medical Association recommendations regarding electrocution state that *"its disadvantages far outweigh its advantages in most applications. Techniques that apply electric current from head to tail....are unacceptable"*¹¹⁹. It should also be noted that the use of electrocution to kill foxes in the UK is not permitted and when foxes were bred in the UK, prior to the fur farming ban, they were killed by lethal injection⁵.

The killing of mink is carried out using a gas chamber, which is moved along a shed and selected animals are removed. 30-50 mink may be placed in a killing box at one time. Studies have commented, *"Unless unconsciousness is instantaneous, it is likely that this also causes stress."* It has also been reported that animals killed by this method may *"pile up and be killed, in part, by suffocation"*⁵.

Conclusion

The end product of fur farming, other than the pelts, are seen in our footage; piles of skinned, bloodied bodies, some with swollen, bitten tongues and protruding eyes. Clear signs of an horrific death at the end of a life of appalling suffering. The unwanted fur from the animals' feet remains in place¹²⁰.

This hugely wealthy industry has not resolved the problems of the inherent cruelty and suffering it causes in decades of ***"....individual care and the monitoring of all animals, while special attention is paid to animal welfare throughout the entire production chain."***

Given the circumstances where the industry pressure is for constantly increasing profits, the wild nature of these animals and their high intelligence, emotional and psychological needs, it is simply not possible for the intensive fur industry to provide these animals with the facilities they need to make the end product ethical.

It is time for all fur farming to be banned.

Wearing animal fur is never ethical. It is cruel and socially unacceptable.



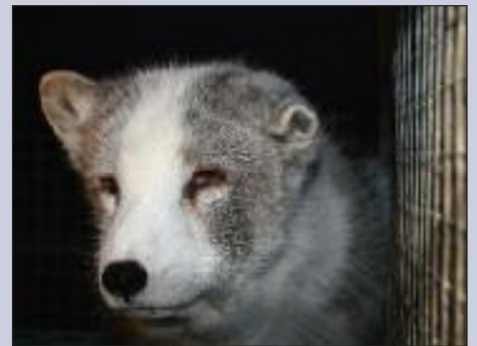
Grass and trees are visible through the wire, close beyond the confines of the cages.



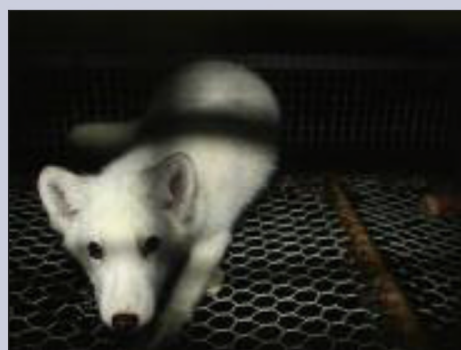
Slaughtered foxes

Bloody Harvest. The real cost of fur

Examples selected from each of the 30 sites visited depicting the conditions.



Bloody Harvest. The real cost of fur



Bloody Harvest. The real cost of fur

Examples selected from each of the 30 sites visited depicting the various conditions of the animals.





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A Lifetime: living and dying on a fur farm



Over two years, from 2014 to 2016, ADI recorded operations at a fur farm in Poland, documenting the life experiences of foxes farmed for their fur. The animals live in cramped, barren wire mesh cages with no space to run or explore and nothing to occupy the interest of these intelligent, inquisitive and highly active animals. Some of the cages were similar to the size of a travel crate that one might use to temporarily transport a dog. However, these foxes remain in the cages for the whole of their short lives. Due to the extreme confinement, living inside an exposed wire mesh box, the animals suffer both psychological and physical damage. Water is provided in a tin can attached to the side of the cages and food is dumped on a tray attached to the outside of the cage for foxes to eat through the mesh. The cages are raised off the ground to allow the animals' faeces and urine to fall beneath, where they are left to pile up.

Contrast these stark conditions to their diverse natural environment and diet. Naturally shy and secretive animals, foxes have large territories and live in dens below ground in open country. They eat a wide range of foods including small mammals, fish, birds' eggs, insects, grass, berries and other fruits¹.

Foxes come from the same family as domestic dogs and behave in similar ways; Borys, Eryk and Aleska are intelligent, emotional and affectionate. Born in a nesting box attached to their bare wire cage, their mother nursed and cared for them during their first weeks of life before she was removed, leaving the siblings to fend for themselves. The trio remained in the cage as they grew, their fur changing to white over the summer, in readiness for the winter.

In the wild, Arctic foxes like Borys, Eryk and Aleska are nomadic, travelling many miles each day over the ice², their fur protecting them from the cold.

Instead of a lifetime of family life and experiences, at less than 7 months of age Boris and then Eryk were removed from their cage by the farmer and killed. As he approached the cage the family became agitated, having seen others killed; they retreated to the far end of the cage, but there was nowhere to hide. Held by their tails, upside down, the young foxes struggled as they were hung up by a back leg and electrocuted. Their frightened sister Aleska could only watch on, as her terrified brothers were killed in front of her. Left alone in the cage, she would be used to produce next year's babies for the trade.



Arctic foxes Borys, Eryk and Aleska were born in a cage and bred for vanity



Aleska can only look on as her brothers, Borys and Eryk, are killed. They were less than 7 months old.

Another fox with distinct markings was observed; she had white fur with dark patches around her eyes and lived as a young cub with her siblings, but was then separated from her family. This young female was isolated from other foxes in a series of different cages, some less than a square metre. For an animal needing a large, rich and challenging wild territory, such excessive confinement is torture. At one year old the fox gave birth to two cubs, from whom she was later separated, a mesh partition dividing the cage.

The following incidents highlight the generally poor conditions, deprivation and lack of welfare on the farm:

- An escaped fox wandered around the farm; two men were seen chasing the fox, each holding a short plank of wood like a club, with another man carrying a net. As the fleeing animal evaded capture, their deformed feet, the result of living on wire mesh, can clearly be seen.
- The cages in which the animals are forced to live are unstable, bowing under the weight of their inhabitants, the foxes' feet protruding through the gaps in the mesh.
- Young foxes attempt to engage in play, but their behaviour is restricted by the confines of the cage.

ADI's previous investigations have uncovered similar conditions, with incidents of deficits in animal care including untreated infection or disease in animals' eyes, noses and ears, open wounds, loss of tails, malformed limbs and dilapidated cages. Footage clearly showed animals suffering terribly as a result of the environment in a number of fur farms³.

The rich social and emotional lives of foxes in the wild is about as far removed as you can get from the lives these animals have on a factory fur farm. In the wild young foxes live in family groups⁴ with female relatives sometimes helping to raise cubs⁵. Arctic foxes dig complex burrow systems for shelter and breeding, with young animals playing in the safety of their family group⁶. Foxes are affectionate, social animals who communicate with one another in complex ways by scent marking and a variety of vocalisations like barks, whines, howls and yelps^{7 8}.

Naturally inquisitive, young foxes love to play and investigate their natural surroundings. These behaviours are denied the animals on factory fur farms, the constant deprivation having a devastating impact on their psychological and physical health, resulting in a lifetime of chronic suffering.

Psychological health

The severely restricted space and barren environment of the fur farm, with nothing of interest and no opportunity to perform normal behaviours, results in abnormal, repetitive movements such as circling, pacing and chewing. These abnormal or stereotypic behaviours indicate that the animal is suffering and cannot cope with their environment^{9 10 11}. results in abnormal, behaviours indicate that the animal is.

Foxes can also display exaggerated fear responses, fur biting¹² and tail biting¹³, with some mothers even killing their babies. During our observations foxes without tails were housed alone in much smaller cages, their loss of appendage likely a result of chewing caused by stress, either by themselves or other foxes. Animals were also seen chewing and pawing at the cage mesh, displaying a desire to both escape and perform instinctive digging and gnawing behaviours.



A female fox separated from her family and kept alone in a small cage



An escaped fox wanders around the farm, evading capture



Tiny fox feet protrude through the cage floor



A fox without a tail housed alone in a small cage

On mink fur farms, animals live in tiny cages alongside thousands of other individuals, causing chronic aggression and biting¹⁴. Mink have several nest sites in the wild, and territories of up to 4km in size¹⁵. Fur chewing is typically the only abnormal behaviour reported by the fur industry because it has a direct impact upon fur production, although it is not the only one displayed. Chinchillas, for example, also display back flipping and bar chewing^{16 17}.



Despite their captivity and breeding, foxes retain all of their wild instincts and needs and are shy and fearful of humans



The semi aquatic mammal mink is denied access to water when farmed for their fur

Foxes have been farmed for their fur since around the beginning of the 20th century however they remain wild animals whose wild nature has not been modified through breeding by humans. They retain all of their wild instincts and needs. Shy and fearful of humans, their mental and emotional suffering is intensified by the extreme confinement of the farming environment.

In contrast to the facts, and to justify their use, the fur industry purports that foxes are domesticated, but this is not the case; indeed selective breeding to make foxes tamer and docile, more dog-like, results in changes to their fur^{18 19} that are not consistent with what the industry demands²⁰. Such animals are not used commercially, resulting in the farmed foxes experiencing a fear of humans which is a major and very common welfare problem.

While the fur industry suggest that farmed foxes do not need to dig because they have no need to make a nest or bury food like wild foxes²¹, studies show that captive foxes have a strong desire to perform these innate behaviours²².

Another claim is that the semi aquatic mammal mink does not miss having water in which to swim if they have never had it²³. An independent study however has shown that mink consider access to a water pool the most valuable resource, even showing signs of physiological stress, similar to that displayed when deprived of food, when access is prevented²⁴.

Even fully domesticated species such as rabbits, also farmed for their fur, have the desire to carry out naturally wild activities, with their range of behaviours highly influenced by their wild ancestry. On fur farms, the small, wire floored cages which animals live in for their entire life, provide no opportunity to run, dig, hunt or play; torture for animals with innate behavioural needs.

Physical health



In poor physical condition, the flimsy flooring of her cage made it difficult for this mother to walk



This fox was filmed on multiple occasions with a bad eye that was swollen with pus and left untreated

Excessive confinement and selective breeding on fur farms cause animals physical health problems. To create bigger pelts foxes have been selectively bred and fed high fat diets, causing their size to almost double in the last 20-30 years. Leg weakness, strain on joints and early abnormal bone growth are also common²⁵. This increase in size causes obesity, leading to difficulty in moving and diarrhoea²⁶.

During our observations, breeding foxes were in a particularly poor physical condition, having experienced one or more breeding cycles. One breeding mother had a saggy belly and thin appearance, the noticeably flimsy flooring of her cage making it difficult for her to walk.

A life stood on a floor of wire mesh resulted in foot problems for many of the foxes who had overgrown claws and bent feet. Instead of standing on the tips of their toes, as foxes usually do, they were bearing weight on the whole foot. The size of the holes in the mesh may cause the animals to walk in this atypical way, to make moving around the cage more comfortable. A study of caged foxes found that bending of the front feet occurs more often on a mesh floor than on earth and smaller cages cause more animals to have bent feet²⁷. A study of caged foxes found that bending of the front feet occurs more often on a mesh floor than on earth and smaller cages cause more animals to have bent feet.

One fox was filmed on multiple occasions with a bad eye, weeping and swollen with pus, its condition deteriorating until it appeared the fox could no longer open the eye, indicating the eye had not been treated.

Killing

Electrocution is a common killing method for foxes, as well as raccoon dogs, and restraint devices like neck tongs and snout clips are commonly used. Animals are killed by heart attack and loss of brain function²⁸.

Foxes observed by ADI were dragged from their cages by their tails, the struggling animals hung up by a rope tied around the back foot and from a hook. Two prods were used to send an electrical current through their bodies, one placed either on the animal's foot pad or inserted into their rectum, with the other put into the mouth. A number of foxes were observed watching their terrified family members and neighbours die. Some foxes could be heard screaming or yelping when the electric prod went into their mouths, but they did not fully bite down, the farmer having to make additional attempts.

The fur industry claims that killing animals for fur is humane, with Fur Europe stating *"...that many people lack information on this matter and often believe that cruel killing practices are used, which is very far from the truth..."*, and *"In practice, animals are euthanized by either gas (CO₂) or electricity, thus avoiding unnecessary pain and stopping heart function quickly."*

ADI observations reveal the reality. While the farmer killed another animal, ADI recorded the previous fox lying on the floor, still breathing after being electrocuted by prods applied to the foot and mouth. The farmer had to hang the fox up a second time and use anal and mouth electrocution to kill the animal.

A study by Agrifood Research Finland on this "traditional" method of killing, suggests that *"electrical stunning produces an immediate and irreversible state of unconsciousness and therefore is a humane way of euthanasia of farmed foxes"*²⁹. The European Commission also states that *"Foxes and raccoon-dogs are commonly electrocuted by an apparatus with two electrodes, one being inserted in the rectum while the other is applied to the mouth. It is believed to induce unconsciousness immediately if the apparatus is used properly"*.

One fox observed by ADI regained consciousness after being electrocuted and tried to escape. After electrocution, the fox is seen writhing on a trolley alongside other dead foxes, as the farmer continues killing other animals, watched by those in a cage behind him. The farmer notices the movement and the fox jumps off the trolley and scrambles away, only to be re-caught and hung up for electrocution once more. As the farmer grabs the fox by the scruff of the neck, the frightened animal knows what is about to happen and desperately tries to avoid biting the electrical probe. The farmer hits the animal on the face with the prod, trying to force the fox's mouth open and eventually the animal is killed.



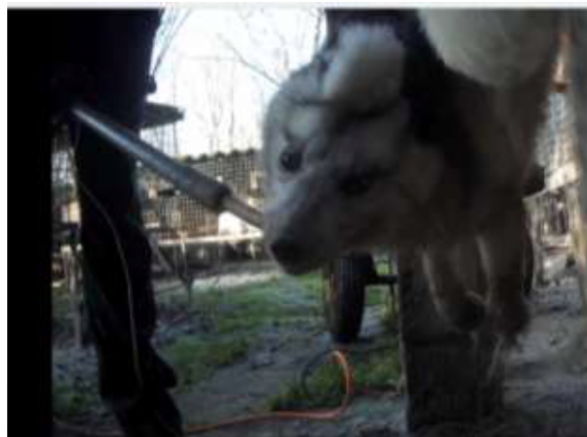
The farmer drags each fox out of their cage by the tail to be killed



Foxes are killed on the farm in full view of family members and neighbours



A fox jumps off the trolley and scrambles away after regaining consciousness after electrocution



The farmer hits the fox in the face with the electrical prod, force their mouth open

The website “the Truth about Fur”, created by a coalition from the fur industry in America and Canada, states that “Electrocution is used in poultry, it’s used in pigs, it’s used in foxes, and the training and the testing has shown that 100% of the animals are dead within 10 seconds”³⁰. The ordeal for the animals observed clearly lasted longer than 10 seconds. During another killing, a conscious fox was left hanging by their back foot, struggling for nearly two minutes while the farmer answered his phone.

Mink farmed for fur are gassed in a “killing box” with 30-50 other individuals. It takes around 1 minute for them to become unconscious, with some dying from suffocation due to the number of animals in the box. Other methods to kill animals farmed for their fur include injection with chemicals and, for chinchillas, neck breaking³¹. Mink farmed for fur are gassed in a “killing box” with 30-50 other individuals. It takes around 1 minute for them to become unconscious, with some dying from suffocation due to the number of animals in the box. Other methods to kill animals farmed for their fur include injection with chemicals and, for chinchillas, neck breaking.



Gassed in a ‘killing box’ it can take mink around a minute to become unconscious

Fur products

The majority of the public is against the wearing of fur on ethical grounds. Opinion polls have found that 57% of people in the US are against fur farming³², as are the majority of citizens polled across Europe³³. For example, 74% are opposed to fur in the UK³⁴ and 66% in Poland³⁵.

Fur is used to make whole products, such as coats and hats, but also increasingly to adorn clothing, such as fur trim on coat hoods or bobbles on hats³⁶, as well as accessories such as fur pom poms on handbags or keyrings. With the rise in global temperatures, trends for short coats with trim, or boleros and vests, are increasing³⁷. It takes up to 35 foxes to make a fur coat³⁸, but most will be killed for trinkets and trim^{39 40}.



Shockingly, a number of investigations have been carried out in the UK which reveal that items sold in high street stores labelled as synthetic fur were actually real fur⁴¹, even when publicly claiming their stores were fur free⁴². This included fur from rabbits, raccoon dogs, mink and cats⁴³. Despite almost half of consumers polled stating that they use price as an indicator of whether an item is real fur, such items are not necessarily expensive⁴⁴ and with real fur often not labelled, it can be very difficult for consumers to make an informed choice.

Fur products can be very cheap, and often priced the same, or less than⁴⁵ faux fur, especially if bought in bulk. For example, readymade trims and accessories can cost as little as 1c (1p) for a rabbit fur pom pom, \$1.50 (£1.16) for a whole pelt, less than \$5 (£3.85) for a fox fur scarf and a square metre of fox fur trim starting from 80 cents (62p).



The Industry

Worldwide, 85% of animals used for fur are farmed in factory conditions⁴⁶ with the remaining 15% trapped in the wild, caught in indiscriminate snares or traps. A whole host of animals are killed for their fur including mink, foxes, rabbits, sables, chinchillas, beavers, lynx, seals, raccoons, coyotes, muskrats, wolves, otters, cats and dogs. Some of the most common species of animals farmed for their fur are mink and fox, as well as chinchilla and raccoon dog⁴⁷.

- Globally over 110 million animals are killed on fur farms each year⁴⁸ while over 16 million animals are trapped in the wild for their fur⁴⁹.
- Killed for their fur each year: more than 15 million foxes⁵⁰; 75 million mink; over 14 million raccoon dogs in Europe⁵¹ and China⁵²; almost 200,000 chinchilla in Europe⁵³.



How they live on the fur farm....



...and where they belong

- **Europe** is one of the major producers of fur, contributing to nearly half of the global total, with over 5,000 fur farms, killing nearly 46 million animals a year⁵⁴.
- **Denmark** and **Poland** are the highest producing countries across Europe, killing over 25 million animals between them per year⁵⁵ and the number is increasing⁵⁶.
- **Poland** produces over 8.6 million pelts per year with annual exports of fur products worth around €3 million⁵⁷. Over 95% of fur skins produced in Poland are exported⁵⁸.
- The **US** is one of the largest importers of Polish furs, directly importing around 5% of their furs⁵⁹. The US has around 275 mink farms producing 4.4 million pelts a year⁶⁰.
- The **US** and **Canada** produce over 4.3 million pelts from wild-trapped animals⁶¹.
- **China** kills around 87 million mink, foxes and raccoon dogs for the fur trade⁶².

In 2011 the global fur industry was estimated to be worth \$15 billion⁶³ (£11 billion). Europe-wide exports value over €994 million, with Italy, Greece, France, Germany and the UK reporting the highest export value⁶⁴. Despite a ban on fur farms, the UK is one of the largest exporters of fur in Europe, exporting over €25 million pounds worth of garments per year⁶⁵. The UK imported over £4.5 million worth of fur skins, and clothing items from China in 2016⁶⁶.

Poland is one of Europe's largest producers of fur, producing over 8.6 million pelts per year, 50,000 of these from foxes; annual exports of fur garments/products are around €3 million⁶⁷. The country produces more than 11% of Europe's fur production value and over 95% of fur skins produced in Poland are exported⁶⁸.

Fur regulations and welfare accreditation

Regulations for the protection of farmed animals in the EU sets out requirements for the prevention of illness, injury and poor health, appropriate feeding, watering and housing as well as provisions to satisfy the animal's natural behavioural needs⁶⁹. Poland's Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development regulations provide for fox and raccoon dog cages to be a mere 50 x 60 x 90 cm, while the space for mink is even smaller, 45 x 30 x 70 cm⁷⁰.

The fur industry has set up an accreditation and labelling scheme called WelFur in an attempt to reassure consumers about the welfare of animals farmed for their fur⁷¹ however this cannot protect welfare nor prevent the suffering of animals farmed for their fur for a number of reasons:

- Animals remain in small, barren wire cages, devoid of interest, which restricts their ability to exercise and perform natural behaviours such as running, swimming and climbing. This leads to the development of abnormal behaviours such as fur chewing and tail biting, which indicates the animal is not coping with the environment and is therefore suffering.
- The scheme receives part funding from the fur industry⁷², creating a conflict of interest and bias.
- The WelFur scheme does not provide standards of welfare or guidance on the handling and killing of fur animals⁷³, which commonly involves restraint using tong-like devices around the neck or body and death by electrocution or gassing. Importantly, as ADI observations show, animals can suffer mishandling and cruelty during killing⁷⁴.
- Assessments made using the WelFur fox protocol do not consistently pick up on foot deformities (as a result of obesity) as an indicator of poor welfare, identified as the most common problem in fur farms investigated⁷⁵.



Animals live in small, barren wire cages, devoid of interest



Foot deformities are an indicator of poor welfare and a common problem on fur farms

- Only a sample of animals are inspected⁷⁶ during assessments of whole farms, which have potentially thousands of animals.
- Many physical health problems experienced by animals farmed for fur may not be visually obvious during inspections. For example breeding mink for larger body size to create bigger pelts can cause reproductive problems, metabolic disorders, and DNA damage⁷⁷, as well as psychological health problems due to the restrictive conditions⁷⁸.

Given the poor level of welfare and space provided within the guidelines of the WelFur programme, it is difficult to see how it can have any meaningful impact on the life experience of animals farmed for fur. It is clear that the pressure to retain unhealthy, intense farming methods to aid increased production and improved profitability hopelessly compromises any animal protection measures.

In this industry, regulation and certification has and continues to fail the animals. Previous ADI investigations of fur farms in Europe have provided evidence of the failure of official fur farming regulations and certification regimes. One investigation exposing horrific conditions and animal suffering in government-certified fur farms in Finland prompted inspections by the Finnish Fur Breeders' Association (STKL) and the Finnish Food Safety Authority (EVIRA) with some farms losing their certification status⁸⁰.



Horrific conditions and animals suffering were exposed by ADI on Finnish farm farms

Conclusions/recommendations

Animals farmed for their fur are denied their most natural behaviours and live in bare wire mesh cages until their deaths. In comparison to the richness of the natural lives of these emotional, intelligent animals, the chronic deprivation and extreme confinement causes animals to suffer both psychological and physical damage. With nothing of interest to occupy these inquisitive and highly active animals, they literally go insane with boredom.

Unable to protect them from this inherently cruel industry, regulation and certification is failing these animals. Despite fur industry claims that methods of killing are quick and humane, the reality is a different story. Animals in fur farms are electrocuted and gassed to death in their millions; some animals are not killed outright causing prolonged suffering.

The reduction of sentient animals to a mere product, bred and killed purely for vanity, is unethical. It is time to change. The majority of the public is against the wearing of fur, but the cheap cost of real fur and lack of labelling can dupe and confuse consumers. The only way to stop the suffering is through prohibitive legislation and for designers and retailers to remove themselves from this cruel trade; this is especially important in countries where fur farming has been banned, like the UK, but which still import, export and sells fur products.



**Fur is never humane.
When you buy fur you buy cruelty.**



5 Fur Farming Facts

1. Animals farmed for their fur suffer a life of mental and physical pain caused by cramped, inadequate housing and a cruel, merciless death – intelligent, feeling beings like family dogs and cats, treated like a product.
 2. Despite fur industry claims methods of killing are quick, the evidence is clear that these animals are terrified as they face a cruel death – intelligent, feeling beings, capable of suffering, killed for an unnecessary product.
 3. Over 15 million foxes are killed for their fur in a year, usually used for trinkets, trims and accessories. Up to 35 foxes are used to make a fur coat.
 4. The majority of people are against the wearing of real fur (74% in the UK, 57% in the US) but the cheap cost and lack of labelling can dupe and confuse consumers into thinking fur products are fake.
 5. Fur is never humane. When you buy fur you buy cruelty – the animals die for vanity.
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