

The Case Against Fur Factory Farming

A scientific Review of Animal
Welfare Standards and 'Welfare'

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Background



- Studied wild and captive mammals for 50 years
- Speciality carnivores, particularly foxes
- Published large number of papers on both captive and wild foxes
- Extensive studies on the welfare of free-living and captive wild mammals

Background



- Around 95 million foxes and mink killed for their fur in 2014
- No detailed species-specific EU legislation setting standards for animals farmed for fur
- Serious welfare concerns highlighted in 1999 Council of Europe and 2001 Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare Reports

Mink and foxes used for fur production are not domesticated



- Study on domestication of foxes and mink shows they can be domesticated
- Domesticated animals show a lot of traits in common
- Domestication incompatible with fur farming, where foxes selectively bred for fur characteristics
- Foxes, mink fundamentally unsuitable for farming

Welfare of mink and foxes farmed for fur



- Several approaches to assessing animal welfare:
- ‘Biological functioning’ – physically and mentally healthy
- ‘Affective (emotional) state’ – are the animals happy or feeling good
- ‘Natural/motivated behaviours’ – do they have what they want

Biological functioning indicators



- Biological functioning seriously impaired
- High levels of stereotypic i.e. abnormal repetitive behaviour
- High levels of injuries, including self-inflicted
- Physical deformities e.g. bent feet
- High levels reproductive failure/infant mortality

Affective/emotional state indicators



- Negative affective states in farmed fur animals
- Fear – avoidance and aggression towards people
- Frustration – levels of stereotypies
- Boredom – fur chewing, tail biting
- Long periods inactivity when awake
- Heightened response to stimuli

Natural/motivated behaviours



- Unable to perform many natural behaviours they are motivated to perform
- Stressed by their inability to perform behaviours such as accessing water or suitable substrates, need to use multiple nest sites
- Foraging and ranging
- Solitary species that use odour to avoid contact

The Five Freedoms



- Widely used to assess animal welfare and as part of assurance standards
- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress

A life worth living



- Farm Animal Welfare Council – minimum legal requirement should be such that an animal has a ‘Life worth living’
- Not the case for animals on factory fur farms
- Welfare of mink and foxes is seriously compromised in current fur farming systems

A life worth living



- Whichever measures of welfare that are used, factory fur farms fail to meet basic standards
- Fail to satisfy all of 'The Five Freedoms'
- Fail to provide a 'Life worth Living'
- Current farming systems could not even fulfil the needs of domesticated mink or foxes

European citizens oppose fur farming



- Majority of European citizens recently polled in ten countries, including those with substantial fur production, are opposed to farming animals for fur in cages
- A number of European countries have already implemented bans
- Widespread support for a ban at European level

The 'Origin Assured' label



- Fur industry's 'Origin Assured' label does not stipulate any specific production standards
- Unenforceable industry codes of practice sufficient for a country to be 'Origin Assured'
- 'Origin Assured' label for fur produced in small wire cages with inherently low welfare
- These production methods opposed by majority of European citizens

'WelFur' cannot address welfare issues



- 'WelFur' assessment protocols specifically designed around the very serious limitations of current housing systems
- Generally reward *status quo*
- Fail to penalise practices that do not meet existing minimum standards
- Downplay importance of serious injuries associated with extreme suffering



'Welfare' cannot address welfare issues



- Fail to address inhumane handling, killing methods, lack of training for all personnel killing animals
- Will underestimate levels of mortality, stereotypies
- Use inadequate measures of hunger, human-animal relationships, mental state
- Use complex scoring systems which allow high scores on some elements to mask serious failings on others

'WelFur' cannot address welfare issues



- Will not achieve 'WelFur's stated aims of ensuring 'a high level of animal welfare' on fur farms and their goal of functioning as 'the new scientific reference' for fur-farmed species
- Only scores welfare up to 'best current practice'
- Would be misleading if used as basis for labelling system



‘Welfare’ does not meet standards for a certification system

- Best practice framework for animal welfare certification schemes
- Professor David Main and colleagues
- Trends in Food Science & Technology, 37, 127-136 (2014)

