

The Animal Welfare Intergroup is today hosting a meeting on fur farming. Fur Europe asked the possibility to give a presentation in order to ensure a balanced debate. The intergroup secretariat denied that request but asked Fur Europe to come and join the open meeting and answer questions if asked.

We do not find that a fair, democratic and balanced debate. Therefore we want to give the MEPs in the intergroup the opportunity to see what we would have presented at the meeting, if we would have had the chance to give a presentation.

EUROPE

Innovating Heritage Responsibly

FUR EUROPE

One industry, one voice

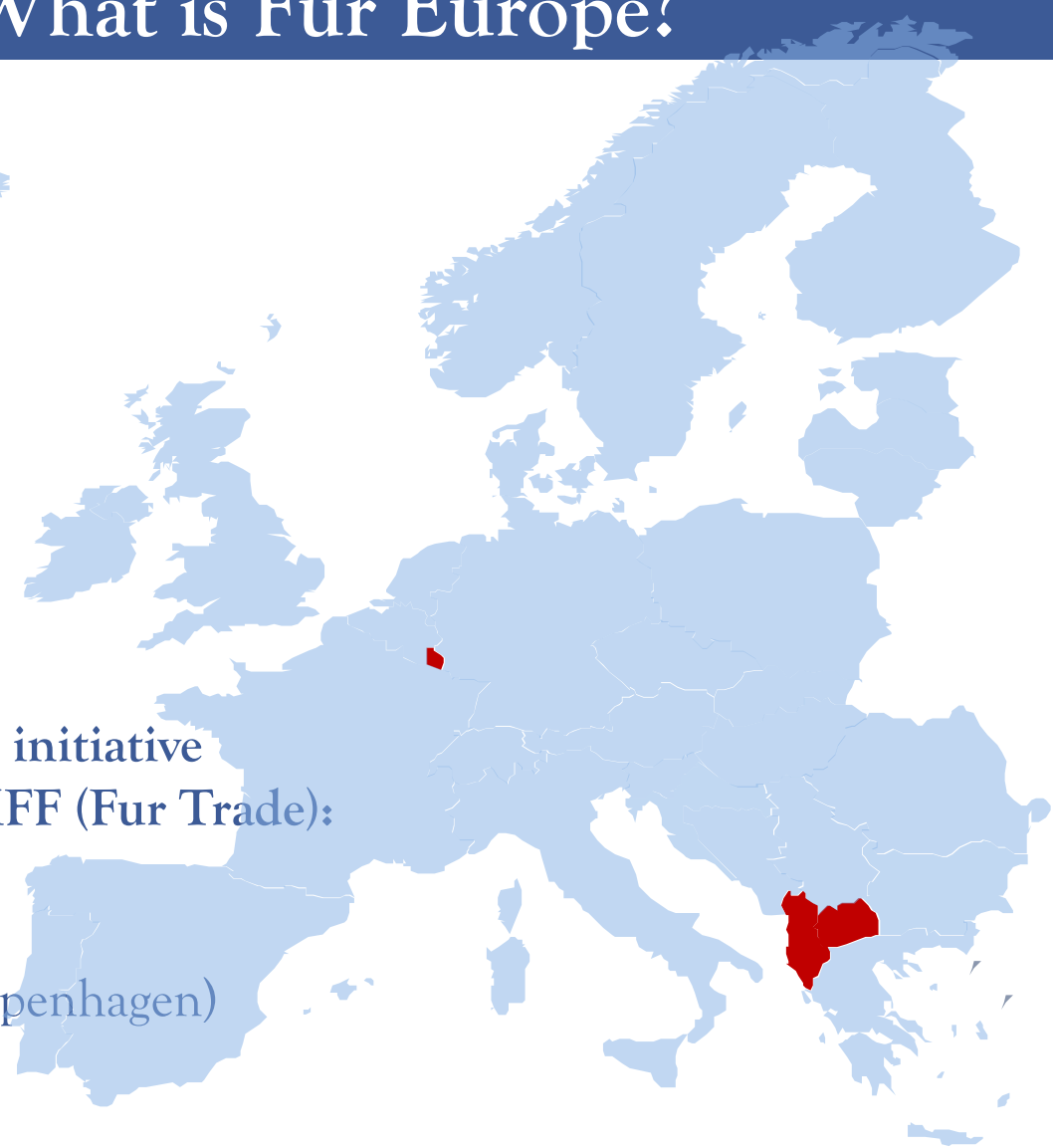
Animal Welfare Intergroup, European Parliament,
Strasbourg, 26 November 2015,

By Mette Lykke Nielsen, Head of Public Affairs, Fur Europe

What is Fur Europe?

New organisation formed as a joint initiative
between EFBA (Fur Breeders) and IFF (Fur Trade):

- 24 fur farmer associations
- 22 fur trade and retail associations
- 2 auction houses (Helsinki and Copenhagen)



Fur Value Chain

INNOVATING HERITAGE
RESPONSIBLY



Fur Europe Position–Animal Welfare

Fur farming in Europe – how should it be regulated?

1. Fur Europe supports the European Parliament's efforts to get the Commission to publish an Animal Welfare Framework law.
2. Fur Europe supports the European Parliament's view that Animal Welfare law should be based on science.
3. Fur Europe sees a clear need for a level playing field in Europe and therefore supports a European Regulation on Animal Welfare.

Fur Europe Pos.–Animal Welfare (cond't)

We acknowledge that breaches of welfare standards may occur on some individual fur farms.

Such breaches are unacceptable and violate the law.

Fur farmers who disregard animal welfare have **no place among fur breeders in Europe.**

WelFur assesses and promotes animal welfare and procures a tool for **better policing.**

What is WelFur?

WelFur is an animal welfare certification programme for European farmed mink and fox based on continuous assessment against a set of animal welfare standards set by independent scientists.

- Largely **inspired by the Welfare Quality® project** that the European Commission initiated in 2004, WelFur programme was initiated in 2009.
- WelFur shares the same objectives as the general public: **Animal welfare is the key priority.**
- WelFur provides a **reliable and feasible system** for animal welfare assessment based on **scientifically proven measures.**
- WelFur works as a **toolbox for the individual fur farmer** to point out and **improve welfare standards** on the fur farm.
- WelFur creates **consumer transparency** about animal welfare standards on European fur farms.



All Science is gathered in WelFur

Fur Europe's WelFur programme:

1. Looks at **all existing research** on mink and fox farming and is thereby the **most comprehensive research done** to this date on fur farming.
2. Covers housing, feeding, health, and behaviour, the **core principles established by animal welfare scientists**.
3. Measures animal welfare by a set of **multifactorial indicators** that were selected on the basis of **their scientific validity**, also including various animal based behavioural indicators.
4. Is a **dynamic programme** that will develop and take into account new research done on fur animals.
5. Is created by the consortium of **7 independent European universities and institutes**.



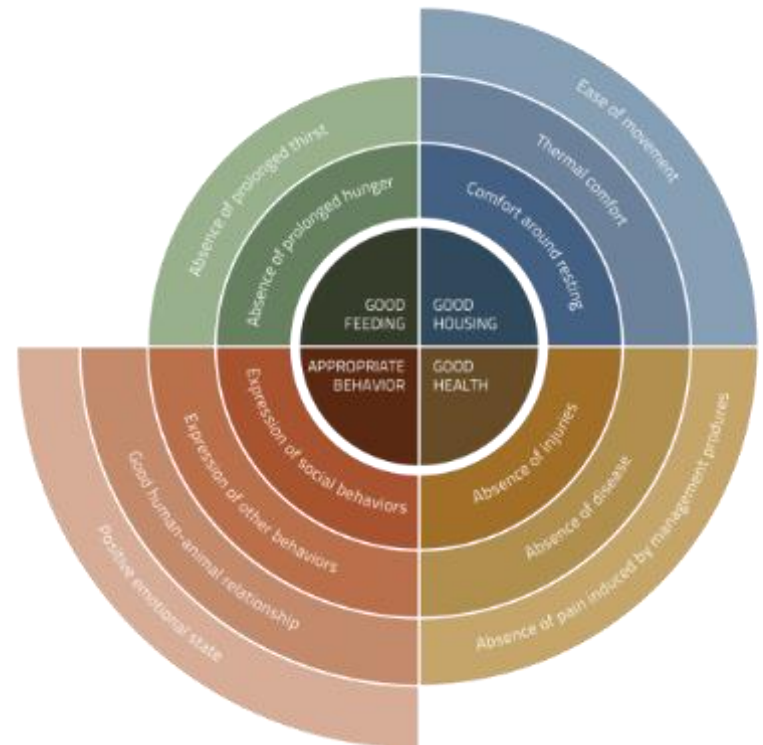
WelFur Principles and Criteria

WelFur is based on the four welfare principles defined in the Welfare Quality project of the European Commission:

Good Housing
Good Feeding
Good Health
Appropriate Behaviour

The principles are divided into 12 welfare criteria.

Based on these criteria, the measures are collected on farms to assess the animal welfare.



WelFur Status



2015: Pilot scale implementation in 10 countries

- ✓ (2-8 farms) in each country, 3 visits to each farm
- ✓ Pilot results will be available early 2016
- ✓ Earlier testing has been done in Denmark, Finland, Norway



2016:

- ✓ Decisions on the full implementation
- ✓ Revisions of the WelFur protocols done by the universities



2016 onwards: Implementation of the WelFur program in Europe

- ✓ Revisions of the WelFur protocols done by the universities



External Review of WelFur

“We commented on scientific reviews that were conducted into potential welfare issues and potential welfare indicators for all three species. These were all detailed, scholarly, involved hundreds of person-hours of work, and were of publishable quality. Their analyses of the key issues, and of the validity, reliability and practicality of the various potential welfare indicators available, were very thoughtful and robust. The relative merits of animals-based indicators versus resource-based measures were well appreciated (animal-based measures being favoured wherever possible, a decision we support). Overall, these reviews provided a firm scientific foundation for all subsequent decisions”.

Source: the ‘External Review of Welfur’ paper, 2015.

Written by:

Prof. Harry Blokhuis, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden;

Prof. Georgia Mason, University of Guelph, Canada;

Prof. Emeritus David Morton, University of Birmingham, UK.



Arguments against Fur Farming

SCAHAW 2001 report – EU Report on fur farming:

Animal Rights advocates claim:

This report shows why fur farming should be banned.

Fur Europe's response:

- Animal Rights Organisations forget to mention the fact that 6 out of 8 experts of the working group commissioned for writing this report asked for removing their names in the final report, as they did not agree with the final conclusions.
- The working group's conclusion “the welfare of mink is reasonably good, at least compared with other intensively farmed animals” was removed in the final report and replaced by several other conclusions that weren't agreed by the scientific working group.
- An erratum was published with all the missing references in the report.

Why Fur Farming Bans: Case NL



Fur farming ban proposal in The Netherlands.

State of Play

- 10 November 2015, The Hague Court of Appeal in the Netherlands ruled in favour of the State's decision on banning fur farming in the country without giving compensation to the Dutch fur breeders.
- Previously the District Court decided in favour of the farmers in all their claims
- This 100% disagreement between the two courts is notable and supports the fact that this kind of issue (can you close down an entire sector without proper compensation?) has never been dealt by Dutch courts.
- **The Dutch Fur Breeders Association has immediately appealed the decision to the Supreme Court,**
- Since there is very clear disagreement between the two courts, it is not fair to say that a final decision has been taken.

Why Fur Farming Bans: Case NL (cond't)



Considerations regarding The Hague Court of Appeal's ruling:

- The court found that what is deemed **ethical and not ethical can be a matter of opinion.**
- With reference to the prevailing view in the Dutch society being that meat is considered a necessity of life while fur is considered a luxury product to which alternatives exist, The Hague Court of Appeal found it justified that the Dutch state made this distinction in the mink farming ban.
- The court **did not assess the ethical argumentation in itself, but accepted the Parliament's decision to use ethics as a foundation of legislation.**

Why Fur Farming Bans: Member States

The **Dutch case** has clearly **demonstrated** that a **ban on fur farming can not be based on grounds of poor animal welfare**. Instead the legislation is based on the **diffuse concept of morality**.

We believe the **welfare provided for the animals whilst alive is more important than the ultimate end-product** (certainly it is unimportant for the animals themselves whether they become food or fashion).

The **ethical discourse** was also used in the **ban in United Kingdom** in 2001.

Other fur bans has been **introduced in areas** where there were **no or very few fur farms**: Austria (2004), Croatia (2007), Serbia (2009), one of the regions of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2009), Slovenia (2013), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - F.Y.R.O.M (2014) and the Belgian region of Wallonia (2015).


Should Fur Farms mirror Nature 100%?

- Fur farms *do* mirror nature (allowing natural behaviour) – but the (scientific) concept of animal welfare is much more than natural behaviour.
- Nature is not per definition ‘good’, life in the wild is per definition a risky and harsh affair – **positive elements related to natural behaviour** should be established with **scientific facts, not romantic assumption** about ‘nature’.
- There is a difference between animal ‘wants’ and ‘needs’, e.g. swimming water is a ‘want’ for (some, but not all) mink as an occupational activity. But this ‘want’ can be replaced by other occupational materials. Swimming water is not an essential ‘need’.

Is Fur Unnecessary Luxury?

- € ○ What is luxury? The **definition of luxury is problematic.**
- 💡 ○ If unnecessary luxury is something human beings can live without because alternatives exist, the same thing is true for meat, wool, silk, circus, tulips, Porches, etc.
- 👔 ○ **Fur sales increase significantly in cold winters** over warmer ones. Thus **fur fulfils a need** - in spite of the existing alternatives.

Is Public Opinion & Morality the same?

-  79% of Europeans find **animal welfare** to be a more important **criteria** of acceptance of animal use **than** the ultimate **end-use** of the animal.
- The prevailing public opinion cannot be a judge on what is morally right or wrong. **Morality is determined by the moral philosophies. Within these philosophies one cannot morally separate one animal from the other** (e.g. Peter Singer).
- **Public opinion can be wrong on morality**, e.g. have various societal majorities been in favour of slavery throughout times.
- **Public opinion is not a constant.** People who have visited fur farms and seen the conditions with own eyes are very positive towards fur farming.

Fur Europe's Ethical Position

- Above all, **animal welfare should be the deciding factor of whether or not it is justified to farm a given species**. It is possible to provide the animal with a good life and achieve human benefits – as opposed to no lives, and no human benefits at all.
- **Animal welfare is the only criteria important for the animals themselves** –they have no appreciation of whether they become food or fashion.
- In terms of utility, **fur has major attributes**:
 - ✓ The **breeding of fur involves the utilisation of waste products** from the production of human food.
 - ✓ Fur **products have decade long life spans** and creates a greater amount of human pleasure than for example a chicken (30 years vs. 1 day).
- **Culture and Heritage** – taking away fur farming is taking away the identity of people working in the sector.
- A **ban on fur farming compromises** the important social mechanism of **freedom of choice**.
- A **ban on fur farming based on morality is arbitrary**. Consistent moral choices are utterly important for society as a means to keep being able to distinguish right from wrong – the very reason for the rise of ethics.

Thank You!

For reliable information about fur in Europe,
please see www.fureurope.eu

To visit a fur farm, please contact us through
info@fureurope.eu