

Brussels, 30th of March 2015

The Honourable Minister Ing. Marian Jurečka
Ministry for Agriculture
Government of Czech Republic

Dear Minister Ing. Marian Jurečka,

We are writing to you from Eurogroup for Animals and the Fur Free Alliance on behalf of our member organizations and millions of supporters worldwide. Among our members are the Czech organizations Svoboda zvířat and Nadace na ochranu zvířat.

Eurogroup for Animals is the pan-European animal advocacy organization, recognized by the European Parliament and the European Commission as the leading animal welfare organization at EU level. The Fur Free Alliance is an international coalition working to inform consumers and retailers about the animal cruelty inherent to fur farming, and managing the world wide Fur Free Retailer Program.

We have been monitoring the situation on Czech fur farms during the last few years as worrisome footage showing serious animal welfare problems has been released. We were very pleased to hear that the Minister of Agriculture previously promised to pay close attention to this important topic.

As Eurogroup for Animals and Fur Free Alliance, we urge you to consider banning or phasing out fur farming in the Czech Republic on the basis of new development on animal ethics and animal behaviour.

Fur animals are essentially wild animals

Foxes and mink, who are the main species reared on European fur farms, are essentially wild animals¹ with little adaptation to humans.² The European Commission's Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (SCAHAW) concluded in its 2001 report, "The Welfare of Animals Kept for Fur Production":

"...these species, 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."³

¹ Farm Animal Welfare Council disapproves of mink and fox farming. Press release, 4 April 1989

² Broom DM, Fraser AF (2007): Domestic animal behaviour and welfare, 4th edition. CAB International

³ European Commission (2001): The welfare of animals kept for fur production. Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare. Adopted on 12-13 December 2001

Fur farms cannot provide a suitable environment for minks and foxes

Unlike other farm animals, who tend to be flock or herd species, minks and foxes are active predators. Kept in small wire cages in long rows, animals on fur farms have been found to exhibit stereotypical behavior, expressed as pacing along the cage wall, repetitive circling or nodding of the head, as well as self-mutilation such as sucking or biting of the animal's tail, head, fur, or other parts of their pelts.⁴

The Council of Europe stated in 1999 that animals should not be kept in fur farms if the conditions they recommended could not be met or if the animals cannot adapt to captivity without welfare problems.⁵ The improvements recommended already in 2001 by the European Commission's Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (SCAHAW) have still not taken place in fur farms. One of the recommendations of the Scientific Committee was that:

'Since current husbandry systems cause serious problems for all species of animals reared for fur, efforts should be made for all species to design housing systems which fulfil the needs of the animals'.⁶

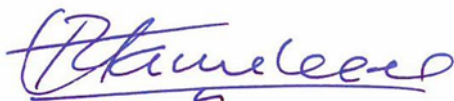
Several countries in Europe have concluded that the current fur farming practice severely affects with the welfare of the animals. In Belgium, the region of Wallonia banned fur farming as of January this year. The region of Brussels has started a similar process.

The UK and Northern Ireland banned fur farming over a decade ago. Other European countries that have banned fur farming are Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Netherlands, Republic of Macedonia and Slovenia. Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Sweden have adopted stricter animal welfare regulations which in practice have limited fur farming.

As you may be aware, a recent 2013 poll (CVVM) shows that 68 % of Czechs agree with ban of fur farming and 80 % of Czech citizens think that the society could get along without fur easily. Fur farming is not a future business for a Europe that cares increasingly about animal welfare.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Kind regards,



Reineke Hameleers
Director Eurogroup for Animals



Joh Vinding
Chair Fur Free Alliance

⁴ European Commission (2001): The welfare of animals kept for fur production. Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare. Adopted on 12-13 December 2001

⁵ Standing Committee of the European Convention for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes (T-AP). Recommendation Concerning Fur Animals, adopted by the Standing Committee on 22 June 1999

⁶ European Commission (2001): The welfare of animals kept for fur production. Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare. Adopted on 12-13 December 2001