

Brussels, 22 September 2015

The Honourable Minister Sven-Erik Bucht  
Ministry for Rural Affairs  
Government of Sweden  
Fredsgatan 8  
103 33 Stockholm  
Sweden

Dear Minister Sven-Erik Bucht,

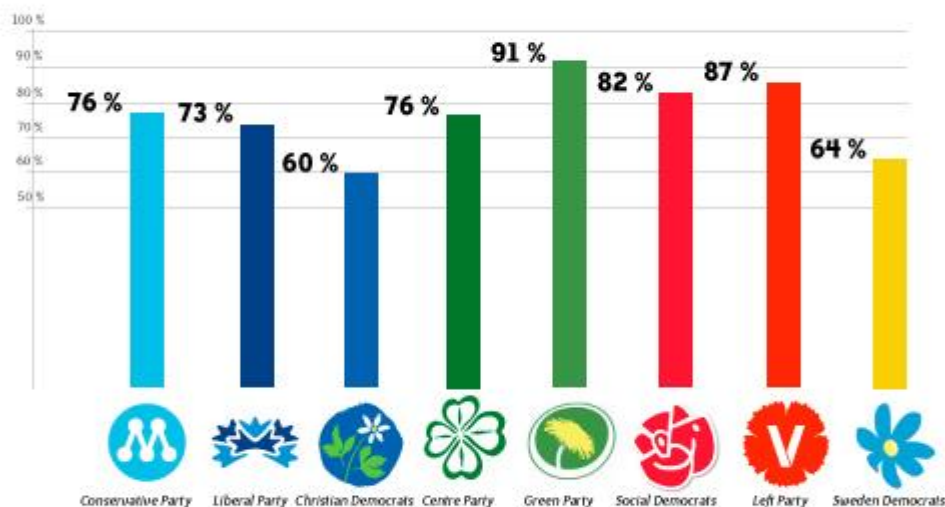
We are writing to you from Eurogroup for Animals and the Fur Free Alliance on behalf of our member organisations and millions of supporters worldwide.

We have been informed by our member organisation Djurens Rätt about the new opinion poll (Demoskop/Djurens Rätt 2015) that clearly shows that not only a majority of Swedish citizens would like to see mink farming phased out, but also a majority of voters within all parties in the Swedish Parliament.

**The phasing out of mink farming would be in line with scientific data, the citizens' views and newer developments in animal ethics.**

## A majority of Swedish voters are against mink farming

Source: Djurens Rätt/Demoskop 2015



**Question:** Do you think that the breeding of minks in cages for fur should be allowed?

8 out of 10 (78 %) Swedes say "No" in a recent poll commissioned by Djurens Rätt (Animal Rights Sweden).

The opposition against mink farming among supporters of each parliamentary party is illustrated above.

  
Djurens Rätt.  
[www.djurensratt.se/mink](http://www.djurensratt.se/mink)

**The voice of the citizens must be heard.** Eurogroup for Animals represents animal welfare interests on many EU advisory committees and consultation bodies, and we often bear witness to national and international governments not sufficiently recognizing the views of the citizens, and we often see industry interests overshadow the concerns of the citizens.

Sweden is known for progressive animal welfare standards and became an example to the rest of Europe when implementing the Recommendations of the Council of Europe concerning foxes. Former Swedish Minister of Agriculture, Margareta Winberg, then stated:

*“...traditional fox farming (may) no longer exist. That is an example of how the animals’ interests and needs take precedence over the industry’s needs – even when that can cause an entire industry to disappear.”<sup>1</sup>*

**Scientific research has extensively pointed out that the behavioral needs of minks cannot be met in fur farms.** In fur farms, the solitary mink is kept in close vicinity to other animals. Minks are kept in small wire mesh battery cages where they have no possibility to perform their species specific behavior. Examples of how fur farming compromises the welfare of mink:

- Minks are highly active animals, in nature they are covering large areas, using multiple hidings, actively swimming, hunting and exploring they environment. Minks usually have territories between 1 and 3km.<sup>2</sup>
- Swimming and diving are highly significant aspects of the mink lifestyle.<sup>3</sup> Minks have webbed feet and their coat is adapted for a semi-aquatic lifestyle. In the wild their swimming and hunting in water is well documented. Their territories always stretch along water.<sup>4</sup>
- Fur-farmed minks are motivated to perform the same activities as the wild mink, despite being bred and raised in captivity, and being provided with food.<sup>5</sup> Generations of breeding didn’t change the basic instincts and needs of mink. Cage enrichment is not enough to eliminate stereotypic behaviour.<sup>6</sup>
- In the fur farm, the semi-aquatic mink is kept in batteries of small wire mesh cages. Deprivation from swimming water results in the same stress level as deprivation from food.<sup>7</sup> Several recent studies confirm the importance of swimming water for mink.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Margareta Winberg. (2001). In: Lyckliga djur – etiska och moraliske perspektiv på djurhållning. Ministry of Agriculture. Sweden.

<sup>2</sup> Nimon & Broom (1999) The welfare of farmed mink (*Mustela vison*) in relation to housing and management: a review. *Animal Welfare* 8:205-228

<sup>3</sup> Nimon & Broom (1999)

<sup>4</sup> Vinke et al (2008) To swim or not to swim: An interpretation of farmed mink’s motivation for a water bath. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 111, 1-27

<sup>5</sup> Mason, Cooper & Clarebrough (2001) Frustration of fur-farmed mink. *Nature* 410:35–36.

<sup>6</sup> Axelsson, H.M.K, Aldén, E. & Lidfors, L. (2009) Behaviour in female mink housed in enriched standard cages during winter. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 121 (3-4): 222-229

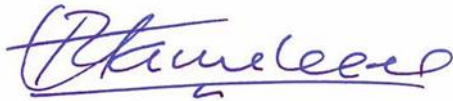
<sup>7</sup> Mason et al (2001)

<sup>8</sup> Nowak, S. (2014): Ethological research on the behaviour ontogenesis and puppy rearing of minks in a housing system according to the German fur farm regulation, University of Munich, Sabass, L. (2014): Neovison vison- Behaviour of farmed mink: A study on the upbringing and group housing of infants according to the German fur farm regulation, University of Munich, Brandl, S. (2014): Ethological research on adult mink living in a housing system according to the German fur farm regulation, University of Munich, Hagn, A. (2009): Ethological study on the usage of open water systems of minks, University of Munich

**As Eurogroup for Animals and Fur Free Alliance we urge the Swedish Government to phase out mink farming.**

We sincerely hope that Sweden will continue taking the lead on animal welfare and we look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Most respectfully,



**Reineke Hameleers**

Director Eurogroup for Animals



**Joh Vinding**

Chair Fur Free Alliance

Eurogroup for Animals is the pan-European animal advocacy organisation, recognized by the European Parliament and the European Commission as the leading animal welfare organisation at the EU level. The Fur Free Alliance is an international coalition working to inform consumers and to advance legislation with the goal of ending the deprivation for fur-bearing animals on fur farms.