The Ethical Case Against Fur Farming

A statement by an international group of academics, including ethicists, philosophers and theologians.

About the Author

The Revd Professor Andrew Linzey is a member of the Faculty of Theology in the University of Oxford and holds the world's first post in Ethics, Theology and Animals - the Bede Jarret Senior Research Fellowship - at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford. He is also Honorary Professor in the University of Birmingham, and Special Professor at Saint Xavier University, Chicago. From 1992-6, he was Special Professor in Theology at the University of Nottingham, and in 1996 was appointed Visiting Professor at the Koret School of Veterinary Medicine, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 2001, he was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by the Archbishop of Canterbury in recognition of his "unique and massive pioneering work" on "the rights and welfare of God's sentient creatures".

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Summary

1. An increasing number of European countries have, or are in the process of, introducing legislation to curtail, or prohibit, fur farming, including Italy, Austria, Sweden and the Netherlands. Last year, fur farming was outlawed in England and Wales on the ground of 'public morality'. Similar legislation has now been passed in Scotland. *(paras 1.1-1.2)*

2. Concern for the right treatment of animals has a long legislative history. Society has a clear stake in safeguarding animals from acts of cruelty. Human beings benefit from living in a society where cruelty is actively discouraged. *(paras 2.1-2.3)*

3. The evidence shows that it is unreasonable, even perfidious, to suppose that fur farming does not impose suffering on what are essentially wild animals kept in barren environments in which their behavioural needs are frustrated. *(paras 3.2-3.6)*

4. Growing ethical concern for animals has been reinforced by considerable intellectual work on the status of animals. There is an emerging consensus among ethicists for fundamental change. *(para 4.1)*

5. There is a strong, rational case for animal protection. Animals make a special moral claim upon us because, inter alia, they are morally innocent, unable to give or withhold their consent, or vocalise their needs, and because they are wholly vulnerable to human exploitation. These considerations make the infliction of suffering upon them not easier – but harder to justify. *(paras 4.2-4.4)*

6. Law has a proper role in defending the weak and the vulnerable from exploitation, including animals and children. *(para 5.1)*

7. There is increasing evidence of a link between the abuse of animals and other forms of violence, notably against women and children. It is an increasingly viable assumption that a world in which abuse to animals goes unchecked is bound to be a less morally safe world for human beings. *(para 5.2)*

8. Those who regard the infliction of suffering on animals as intrinsically objectionable rightly oppose fur farming. In their view, there are certain acts against vulnerable subjects that are so morally outrageous that they can never be morally licit. *(para 6.1)*

9. Fur farming is, however, also unacceptable to those who hold that the infliction of suffering can sometimes be justified. Fur farming fails a basic test of moral necessity. It is wholly unjustifiable to subject animals to prolonged suffering for trivial ends, such as fur coats or fashion accessories. Fur is a non-essential luxury item. *(paras 6.2-6.3)*

10. It is sometimes argued that fur farming is justifiable because it is consistent with religious notions that animals can be used for human benefit. But Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have never held that our use of animals should be illimitable or without moral constraint. *(paras 8.2-8.3)*

11. The claim that banning fur farming is an infringement of legitimate freedom is untenable; many previous cruelties (now illegal) have been defended on that basis. There can be no civil right to be cruel. *(paras 9.1-9.2)*

12. It is sometimes held that Member States should wait for the European Commission to act on issues of animal welfare. In fact, under the 1999 protocol, Member States already have the responsibility to 'fully consider animal welfare' as well as the freedom to initiate appropriate legislation. One Commissioner has publicly stated that some Member States are failing to comply with even their existing responsibilities. *(paras 11.1-11.2)*

13. In a democratic society, the law should properly reflect our changed ethical perception of animals and, specifically, the public's long-standing opposition to fur farming. *(para 12.2)*

14. There is an overwhelming case for the abolition of fur farming on ethical grounds. We urge all EU countries to give urgent consideration to such legislation on the ground of public morality. *(para 13.2)*

1.1 An increasing number of European countries are legislating against fur farming. Italy and Austria have already imposed such stringent animal welfare conditions on fur farming that the practice has, in effect, become uneconomic. The Netherlands has already agreed to phase out fox farming over ten years and is now considering a similar move against mink farming. A move by Sweden to ban fur farming on ethical grounds now appears imminent. Last year, the Westminster Parliament of the United Kingdom passed the Fur Farming (Prohibition) Bill, which makes it a criminal offence in England and Wales to keep animals solely or primarily for slaughter for the value of their fur, or for breeding progeny for such slaughter. A similar measure has recently been passed by the Scottish Parliament.

1.2 The principal ground cited for this legislation within the United Kingdom is 'public morality'. The Parliamentary Secretary to the (then) Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Elliot Morley, gave the following account of the Government's position:

> *Morality is important when it comes to the treatment of animals. I shall repeat our view on the morality of fur farming. Fur farming is not consistent with a proper value and respect for animal life. Animal life should not be destroyed in the absence of a sufficient justification in terms of public benefit. Nor should animals be bred for such destruction in the absence of sufficient justification. That is the essence of our argument for applying morality to a Bill of this kind, and for justifying it under article 30 of EU regulations. (1)*

2.1 Some people have expressed surprise at the idea that our treatment of animals is a public moral issue. In fact, concern for the right treatment of animals has been the subject of legislative activity since 1800 when the first animal protection Bill (to abolish bull-baiting) was presented to the House of Commons. Since that time, there has been a growing awareness that there must be legal constraints on the uses to which animals can be put. There are now a wide range of measures regulating, or prohibiting, use in almost every sphere of human activity that affects animals. These include the use of animals in commercial trade, in farming, in research, in entertainment and even as domestic companions. Far from being ethically regressive, there is an overwhelming acceptance that these developments are conducive to a civilised society, even the complete prohibition of practices (such as cock-fighting and bull-baiting) whose abolition was attended by no little controversy.

2.2 These developments have been supported philosophically by a growing sense that society has a clear stake in safeguarding animals from acts of cruelty. Not only is it wrong to make animals suffer needlessly, but also humans themselves benefit from living in a society where cruelty is actively discouraged and punishable by law. More recently, a number of factors have stimulated a concern that this, now commonly accepted, position should be strengthened still further.

3.1 In the first place, many previous attempts at legislation defined cruelty in specific relation to physical acts, such as beating, kicking, hitting, stabbing, and so on. Such a definition reflected the common understanding of the time that animals could be harmed solely, or principally, by the infliction of adverse physical activity. We now know, however, that animals can be harmed, and sometimes severely, in a range of other ways, by – for example, their subjection to unsuitable environments where their basic behavioural needs are frustrated. These 'harms of deprivation' – as they have been called – cause as much, if not more, suffering to animals than the infliction of physical pain. Our understanding of animals – their mental states and behavioural needs – has necessitated a much wider appreciation of harm than was previously possible through simple appeals to physical cruelty.

3.2 Fur farming is a case in point. Some people, unaware of the conditions on fur farms, assume that breeding animals for fur is like any other form of farming and poses no special welfare problems. There are good reasons for thinking otherwise. The UK Government's own advisory body, the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), made public its disapproval of mink and fox farming in 1989. Its judgement makes clear the particular difficulties in subjecting essentially wild animals to intensive farming:

Mink and fox have been bred in captivity for only about 50-60 generations and the Council is particularly concerned about the keeping of what are essentially wild animals in small barren cages. The Council believes that the systems employed in the farming of mink and fox do not satisfy some of the most basic criteria, which it has identified for protecting the welfare of farm animals. The current cages used for fur farming do not appear to provide appropriate comfort or shelter, and do not allow the animals freedom to display most normal patterns of behaviour. (2)

3.3 So severe were these strictures that the Council declined to issue a Welfare Code in respect of fur farming as it has done for other farming practices. The Council's Chairman, Professor C. R. W. Spedding, made clear in a letter to the then Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture that 'one of the objects of the statement is to give a clear warning that FAWC does not see fur farming as an acceptable alternative enterprise as currently practised. We have decided against drawing up a Welfare Code for mink and fox-farming to avoid giving it the stamp of approval which a Government-backed Welfare Code would imply'. *(3)*

3.4 This unusually strong position has been subsequently confirmed by further scientific research. A comprehensive review of the welfare of farmed mink in 1999, undertaken by Professor D. M. Broom (Professor of Animal Welfare at the University of Cambridge) and his colleague A. J. Nimon of the Department of Clinical Veterinary Medicine, concluded that 'the high level and pervasiveness of sterotypies among farmed mink, and the incidence of fur chewing and even self-mutilation of tail tissue, suggest that farmed mink welfare is not good. Stereotypies are associated with negative consequences such as slower kit growth, and higher levels of feed intake without an increase in growth'. *(4)* A further study published in 2001, by the same authors in relation to the welfare of farmed foxes, concluded: 'Research on fox welfare in relation to housing shows that farmed foxes have a considerable degree of fear, both of humans and in general, that the barrenness of cages is a significant problem for the foxes, and that farmed foxes can have substantial reproduction problems. There is clear evidence that the welfare of farmed foxes in the typical bare, wire-mesh cages is very poor'. *(5)*

3.5 Such conclusions are confirmed by the recently published Report on the Welfare of Animals Kept for Fur Production by the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare of the EU. Areas of concern with respect to the welfare of mink include, gastric ulcers, kidney abnormalities, tooth decay, self-mutilation, and stereotypies. Foxes were found to suffer from, inter alia, 'abnormal behaviours, such as exaggerated fear responses, infanticide, stereotypies and pelt-biting'. *(6)* While ethical questions were not included within the remit of the Committee, it concluded on welfare grounds alone that 'current husbandry systems cause serious problems for all species of animals reared for fur'. *(7)*

3.6 In the light of all these findings, it is now unreasonable, even perfidious, to hold that fur farming does not impose suffering on animals. The issue is not whether direct, physical pain is inflicted upon such animals. It is rather that the confinement of wild creatures in barren enclosures where their behavioural needs cannot be adequately met, inevitably causes suffering. Such forms of confinement cannot by their nature be made 'animal-friendly'; no captive environment can adequately facilitate the full range of social and behavioural needs that are essential to the well-being of such creatures. The worst aspects of fur farming may conceivably be ameliorated by some environmental improvements, but no reform can eradicate the suffering inherent in such systems.

4.1 The second factor, which has stimulated change, is the growing ethical sensitivity to issues of animal protection. This sensitivity has been reinforced by considerable ethical and philosophical work on the status of animals. It has been said that there has been more philosophical discussion of animals during the last twenty years than there was during the previous two thousand. Our use of animals in modern farming has been the subject of particularly strong criticism. To take just one example, Dr David DeGrazia, in a comprehensive study maintains that 'the institution of factory farming, which causes massive harm for trivial purposes, is ethically indefensible'. *(8)* While not all ethicists agree on the precise limits that should be observed in our treatment of animals, there is an emerging consensus that we have special kinds of obligations to animals and that a great deal of what we now do to them is morally unacceptable. There is, in short, a strong desire among ethicists who have addressed this topic for fundamental change.

4.2 It is important to spell out precisely why animals should be regarded as constituting a special moral case, or as having a special claim on our attention. It is not enough to simply say that the infliction of suffering is wrong; we need to provide an account of why it is so. When analysed impartially we can see that there are a number of considerations that are peculiarly relevant to animals and also to some vulnerable human subjects. For example:

- Animals cannot give or withhold their consent. The point is obvious but it has considerable moral significance. It is commonly accepted that 'informed consent' is required in advance by any person who wishes to over-ride the legitimate interests of another. The absence of this factor requires, at the very least, that we should exercise special care and thoughtfulness. The very (obvious) fact that animals cannot agree to the purposes to which they are put increases our responsibility and singles them out (along with others) as a special case.
- Animals cannot represent or vocalise their own interests. Again the point is obvious but it has serious moral implications. Individuals who cannot adequately represent themselves have to depend upon others to do so. The plight of animals – precisely because they cannot articulate their needs or represent their interests – should invoke an increased sense of obligation and mark them out as a special case.
- Animals are morally innocent. Because animals are not moral agents with free will, they cannot – strictly speaking – be regarded as morally responsible. That granted, it follows that they can never (unlike, arguably, adult humans) deserve suffering, or be improved morally by it. Animals can never merit suffering; proper recognition of this consideration makes any infliction of suffering upon them particularly problematic.
- Animals are vulnerable and defenceless. They are wholly, or almost wholly, within our power and entirely subject to our will. Except in rare circumstances, animals pose us no threat, constitute no risk to our life, and possess no means of offence or defence. Moral solicitude should properly relate to, and be commensurate with, the relative vulnerability of the subjects concerned.

The key point to note is that these considerations make the infliction of suffering and death on animals not easier – but harder to justify.

4.3 These considerations are all particularly relevant to the issue of fur farming. After all, in such farming we keep essentially wild animals captive and make them subservient to our purposes; we frustrate their basic behavioural needs and we kill them in a frequently inhumane way. We do all this even though they have not harmed us and even though they do not pose any threat to our life or well-being. They cannot 'assent' to their maltreatment, or even vocalise their own interests. Theirs is a state of moral innocence; they are without the means of defence and are wholly vulnerable. In short: we have made them entirely dependent upon us; they deserve, as a matter of justice, special moral solicitude.

4.4 Perhaps the best analogy is the special solicitude now rightly extended to weaker members of the human community, for example, newly born infants or young children. It is, inter alia, their sheer vulnerability, their inability to articulate their needs, and their moral innocence, that compels us to insist that they be treated with special care and protected from exploitation. But, if this argument is sound, it applies as much, if not more, to sentient mammals as well.

5.1 The third factor that has stimulated change is the recognition that law has a specific role in protecting the weak and the vulnerable. It is worth noting that the concern for the alleviation of animal suffering that emerged in the nineteenth century was part of a broader 'humanitarian movement' equally concerned for the protection of children from abuse and cruelty, the abolition of slavery, the establishing of minimum working conditions and the emancipation of women. Many of the key movers for animal protection - William Wilberforce, Lord Shaftesbury, Fowell Buxton – to take only three examples - were prominent in all these campaigns. They pioneered the view that concern for the vulnerable and defenceless was a moral, specifically religious, duty. From this starting point, and from that day on, we have continued to welcome a range of legislative measures that grant specific protection to those who are easily abused and exploited. The notion then that there is a legitimate social or public interest in limiting animal suffering has a long provenance. There is a benevolent motivation behind socially progressive legislation that some, perhaps many, would hold to be the proper function of law, namely to defend the weak and defenceless.

5.2 But the case for including animals within this legislative advance is even stronger today. It is buttressed by the increasing empirical evidence of a link between abuse and cruelty to animals, and other forms of violence, notably against women and children. In the past the connection, if any, was largely rhetorical. Early reformers sensed that there must be a connection, and assumed that it was so. Today, however, heavyweight publications are beginning to marshal the evidence. To take just one example, Frank R. Ascione and Phil Arkow in their collection, *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse* (the result of a multidisciplinary symposium of people professionally concerned with social work, child protection, domestic violence, as well as animal protection) maintain that: 'Violence directed against animals is often a coercion device and an early indicator of violence that may escalate in range and severity against other victims'. *(9)* Much has yet to be done to explore and document that connection but that there is a link is increasingly difficult to deny. It is an increasingly viable assumption that a world in which abuse to animals goes unchecked is bound to be a less morally safe world for human beings.

5.3 Such awareness should inform, inter alia, legislative attempts to limit the infliction of suffering on animals. The need for reform extends not only to the protection of domestic species but also to 'managed' species subject to commerce and exploitation. As already noted, the institutionalised use of animals in modern farming has become a major area of concern. An increasing number of people want to move towards a society in which commercial institutions do not routinely and habitually abuse animals.

6.1 We now need to address more precisely the moral issue involved in fur farming. Some people hold that the infliction of suffering on animals is intrinsically objectionable and is never morally justifiable. This position deserves much more consideration than is usually given to it. The considerations outlined in paragraph 4.2 show that there are good rational grounds for supposing that certain kinds of activity - directed against vulnerable subjects - are so morally outrageous that they ought never to be countenanced whatever the circumstances. The infliction of prolonged suffering on captive creatures is, from this perspective, intrinsically evil. No circumstances, benefits, or compensating factors, can ever remove the fundamental offence or render the practices morally licit.

6.2 Others hold that suffering can sometimes, perhaps rarely, be justified if it can be shown to be necessary, or if there is sufficient benefit, and also if the end result cannot be achieved by other means. For the latter, the issue turns on whether there is sufficient moral necessity, or benefit, involved in fur farming to justify its continuance.

6.3 In ethical terms, to show that something is necessary requires more than a simple appeal to what is fashionable, or even desirable. Human wants do not by themselves constitute moral necessity. It has to be shown that the good procured is essential and that no alternative means are available. When viewed from this perspective, it can be seen immediately that fur farming fails a basic moral test. The wearing of fur – whilst conceivably pleasant, fashionable, or even desirable – cannot reasonably be defined as essential. Fur is at best a luxury item. When weighed in terms of a cost/benefit analysis, the case fails – and spectacularly so. It is obviously unjustifiable to inflict suffering on animals for non-essential, indeed trivial, ends. In that sense, Elliot Morley was right to insist that animals should not be 'bred for such destruction in the absence of sufficient justification'.

7.1 Unsurprisingly, perhaps, supporters of fur farming fail to address the central moral issue and frequently provide exaggerated claims for the 'necessity' of fur. For example, Richard D. North accepts that fur is a luxury item and still defends it. He maintains that 'There is a powerful case to be made for the idea that the need for luxury is one of the most fundamental human urges, as it is one of the most powerful well-springs of activity in the whole animal kingdom'. He continues:

> *Biologists have long understood a Darwinian explanation for the apparent excesses of display indulged in by animals such as the peacock. Sexual attractiveness that involves a conspicuous and costly display demonstrates a male's ability to satisfy to an extraordinary degree the capacity to fulfil his basic needs. (10)*

7.2 Even allowing for the correctness of North's interpretation of animal behaviour, no human being has a 'basic need' for adornment articles, such as fur coats or fashion accessories. Even if they could be shown to be a component in fulfilling sexual desire, the case would still have to be made that such wants (as distinct from needs) could not be met through alternative means. To say the least, the argument is frivolous in the context of animal suffering.

8.1 Before we conclude, there are six objections which should be briefly addressed.

8.2 The first objection is that fur farming is consistent with commonly held religious notions that animals have a subordinate place to humans and that they are made for human use. This objection deserves some scrutiny. Whilst it is true that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have held at some points in their history that some use of animals is justifiable, none of them have ever supposed that our use of animals should be illimitable or without moral constraint. Within Judaism, there is a strong, biblically-grounded, injunction against cruelty to animals, and there are authoritative voices within Judaism against killing for pleasure or adornment articles, such as fur. *(11)* Islam, too, has its own tradition of concern for animals originating in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad who condemned those who were cruel to dogs and birds. *(12)* And within Christianity, there are growing signs of a vocal opposition to animal abuse and especially the killing of animals for fur. In 1992, for example, forty-one Anglican bishops (including two archbishops) signed a statement refusing to support or wear fur on moral and theological grounds. *(13)*

8.3 The idea that religious authorities can be uncritically utilised in this debate in defence of fur farming should therefore be jettisoned. Indeed, there are sufficiently positive grounds within almost all religious traditions to oppose the utilisation of animals for trivial purposes, such as luxury or adornment. These grounds include: the intrinsic value of sentient creatures made by God; the responsibility of humans as stewards and guardians of God's creation and, not least of all, a near-unanimous rejection of the deliberate infliction of suffering as an abuse of our power over animals. It is worth noting that the modern movement for the protection of animals, specifically the inception of the world's first national animal welfare society, the SPCA (as it then was) in 1824, owed a great deal to its Christian and Jewish founders, Arthur Broome and Lewis Gompertz.

9.1 The second objection is that banning fur farming is a denial of individual freedom. In that sense, the statement is self-evidently true. The legal prohibition of any practice does of course limit individual freedom. But what has to be shown, morally, is that the outlawing of fur farming constitutes an unwarranted or unjustifiable invasion of individual liberty. It should be pointed out that right from the outset animal protectionists have had to suffer the use of this argument to prevent the prohibition of even the grossest acts of cruelty. For example, commenting on the failure of the first Bill to outlaw bull-baiting in 1800, *The Times* was adamant that the attempt was misconceived since 'whatever meddles with private personal disposition of a man's time is tyranny direct'. *(14)*

9.2 The current attempt to cast animal protectionists in the guise of anti-civil libertarians misses the moral point that liberty to inflict unnecessary suffering, even and especially to animals, violates civilised values and renders weaker humans also vulnerable. For if the argument is logically sound, there are no good reasons for stopping at animals. There can be no civil right to be cruel.

10.1 The third objection is that banning fur farming is inconsistent when there are greater cruelties that need to be addressed. Whether there are greater cruelties than the infliction of prolonged suffering on wild animals is debatable. But, even allowing for that, the argument also has a poor pedigree. The same was also said, inter alia, about those who opposed bull-baiting, cock-fighting and even those who sought protection for domestic cattle. If one took the view that all welfare legislation for humans or animals had to be rigorously consistent (in the sense of encompassing all possible abuses) before any single law was enacted, we should have logically opposed the enactment of all socially progressive legislation since 1800.

10.2 The fact is that animal protection legislation has, of necessity, to be a gradual piece-meal affair depending as it does on popular, democratic support for its enactment. Each case has to be judged on its merits, the relevant arguments advanced, and popular support marshalled. If, in this process, legislation is sometimes inconsistent then it has to be recognised that all legislation – for both human and animal protection – itself depends upon public opinion, which is itself not

always consistent. In a democratic society, the risk of inconsistency has to be acknowledged; the alternative (in the case of humans as well as animals) is not even to begin the process because of the inevitable risk of inconsistency.

11.1 The fourth objection is that responsibility for animal welfare should rest with the European Commission rather than Member States. It should be noted, however, that that objection is not endorsed by the relevant Commissioner, David Byrne. In a remarkably frank statement, he describes this attitude as 'passing the buck', and continues: 'Speaking as the European Commissioner with responsibility for key areas of public concern, such as health and consumer protection and food safety, I am always prepared to accept my responsibilities. But, equally, I insist on ensuring that others should not hide behind others in evading their responsibilities'.

His reasoning deserves to be read at length:

> *The public should be in a position where they can be confident that animals are treated humanely. And that their elected representatives and the public authorities take the issue seriously. But the question obviously arises, which authorities? Is it, for example, the role of the European Commission to ensure that animals are treated humanely? I will not duck the issue. The Commission role relates only to its legal powers and competence. We cannot ensure that animals are humanely treated throughout the EU. For a number of reasons – we do not have the resources, the powers or the legitimacy to do so.*

And he underlines the point in even more stark language:

> *Again and again, often in the area of animal welfare, Member States are found to be at fault in not meeting acceptable standards … I am growing increasingly weary at the repeated reports of my officials on continued non-respect of Community provisions on animal welfare. (15)*

11.2 The message then seems overwhelmingly clear. Not only can Member States act, they actually have a responsibility to do so. Under the 1999 protocol they already have a responsibility to 'fully consider animal welfare' as well as freedom to initiate appropriate legislation. In fact, the EU has not the powers even to enforce existing regulations, which are inadequately respected by some Member States. In the light of these frank admissions, the case for Member States to act positively on their own is overwhelming. To wait for the Commission to act on a European-wide basis is - in the words of Commissioner Byrne - to 'pass the buck'.

12.1 The fifth objection is that the notion of 'public morality' is misconceived, even, in the colourful language of one Westminster M.P., 'a truly terrifying concept'. (16) In fact, as we have shown, the development of animal protection – as well as the protection of weaker human subjects - has often entailed an appeal to social values. We accept, however, that morality cannot be decided by opinion polls. Majorities are not always right and popular sensitivities can be misguided. But such considerations should not blind us to the fact that animal protection legislation has always – in a democratic society – depended, in the last resort, on popular support.

12.2 Neither is such an appreciation reprehensible. In a changing world with (hopefully) developing moral sensitivities, it follows that law should itself reflect changed moral perceptions. Opinion polls carried out in the UK have consistently shown that 75 to 76 per cent of the population is opposed to fur farming. MORI polls conducted in 1996 and 1997, for instance, both showed that 76 per cent supported an outright ban. The movement for the protection of animals needs public support in order to achieve legislative change. Law is the outward and visible sign of a changed, or changing, moral consensus. Given such a longstanding consensus in a democratic society, it behoves those who wish to frustrate the majority view to provide convincing argument.

13.1 The final objection is that law, even if justifiable in terms of preventing abuses, should be used sparingly, especially when abolitionist legislation is proposed. The argument may be generally sound. Not everything that the public dislikes should be made illegal. Arguments for prohibition or abolition have to be well made. But even if arguments for prohibition of existing practices should be treated with caution, it does not follow that such arguments cannot in fact be made, and reasonably so. In our view, fur farming is a case in point. Some systems of abuse cannot be reformed; their worst aspects may be ameliorated through regulation, but they constitute a moral offence that is so grave and so deep that abolition is the only proper course of action.

13.2 We believe that fur farming should be done away with. Nothing morally essential is lost thereby, and much gained. To fail to legislate would mean turning our backs on the long history of progressive anti-cruelty legislation. It would signal that we have in effect given up on the struggle to eliminate unjustifiable suffering in our society. It would constitute a worrying precedent that commercial concerns are immune from public moral sensibility. It would be to act in ignorance of the knowledge that we have acquired about the sentiency and behavioural complexity of other creatures with whom we share the earth. In short: a system of farming that inherently exposes animals to high levels of suffering for trivial ends cries out for abolitionist legislation. We urge Member States of the EU to give this matter their urgent attention.

Notes

(1) Elliot Morley, *Hansard* (15 May 2000) (London: HMSO, 2000) Vol. 350, No. 99, p. 76; see also pp. 40-1.

(2) 'Farm Animal Welfare Council Disapproves of Mink and Fox farming', Press Notice, 4 April 1989, p. 1.

(3) Letter to the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food from Professor C. R. W. Spedding, Chairman of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, 31 March 1989.

(4) A. J. Nimon and D. M. Broom, 'The Welfare of Farmed Mink *(Mustela vison)* in Relation to Housing and Management: A Review', *Animal Welfare,* 1999, Vol. 8, p. 222. See also the discussion, C. M. Vinke, 'Some Comments on the Review of Nimon and Broom on the Welfare of Farmed Mink', *Animal Welfare,* 2001, Vol. 10, pp. 315-323, and 'Response to Vinke's Short Communication: Comments on Mink Needs and Welfare Indicators', same issue, pp. 325-326.

(5) A. J. Nimon and D. M. Broom, 'The Welfare of Farmed Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and *Alopex lagopus* in Relation to Housing and Management: A Review', *Animal Welfare,* 2001, Vol. 10, pp. 241-2.

(6) Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare, *The Welfare of Animals Kept for Fur Production* (Health and Consumer Protection Directorate-General, European Commission), adopted 12-13 December, 2001, p. 185.

(7) Ibid, p. 186; see also the relevant EU Press Release on Fur Farming, 19 December, 2001, which states: 'The Committee finds that mink and foxes generally suffer from being kept in cages because it limits their natural behaviour as wild animals'.

(8) David DeGrazia, *Taking Animals Seriously: Mental Life and Moral Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 284.

(9) Frank R. Ascione and Phil Arkow (eds) *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1999) Preface, p. xvii.

(10) Richard D. North, *Fur and Freedom: In Defence of the Fur Trade* (London: The Environment Unit, Institute of Economic Affairs, 2000) p. 9.

(11) See, for example, Andrew Linzey and Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *After Noah* (London: Mowbray/Continuum, 1997), especially pp. 35-61. The book gives an account of the resources within the Jewish and Christian traditions for a positive view of animals.

(12) See, Neal Robinson (ed and trans), *The Sayings of Muhammad* (London: Duckworth, 1991), pp. 48-9.

(13) Andrew Linzey (ed), *Cruelty and Christian Conscience; Bishops Say No to Fur* (London: Lynx Educational Trust, 1992). The Foreword is written by the Archbishop of Wales.

(14) *The Times* (editorial), 25 April, 1800, cited in A. W. Moss, *The Valiant Crusade: The History of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* (London: Cassell, 1961) p. 14.

(15) Commissioner David Byrne, Address to the Conference of Ethics and Animal Welfare, Stockholm, 29 May, 2001; my emphases.

(16) *Hansard,* ibid, p. 64.

The paper was written by Professor Andrew Linzey. Included are the names of individuals who wish to be associated with it. Institutional affiliations are given for the purpose of identification only. All individuals sign in their personal capacity.

respect for animals

FIGHTING THE INTERNATIONAL FUR TRADE

a member of the

FUR FREE ALLIANCE

Respect for Animals
PO Box 6500
Nottingham NG4 3GB
Tel: 0115 952 5440
www.respectforanimals.org