

#FUR FREE EU

ANIMAL WELFARE PROBLEMS IN FUR FARMING



EUROGROUP
4ANIMALS

In 2001 the European Commission's Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (SCAHAW) recommended:

'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'.²¹



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ANIMAL WELFARE PROBLEMS IN FUR FARMING

GOOD ANIMAL WELFARE ON FUR FARMS IS UNATTAINABLE

Numerous scientific studies have extensively pointed out that the behavioral needs of minks and foxes, the main species reared for fur, cannot be met in fur farms.

It is not possible to significantly improve the welfare as long as these active carnivores are kept in wire mesh battery cages without the possibility to express many of their species-specific behavior. Farmed-raised minks are highly motivated to perform the same activities as the wild mink, despite being bred and raised in captivity, and despite being provided with food.¹ Stereotypies, repetitive movements such as circling or pacing in the cage, indicate that animal welfare is compromised. Cage enrichment is not enough to eliminate stereotypic behaviour.²

1)

HIGH FUR QUALITY IS NOT A WARRANT FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

The fur industry often claims that the welfare of minks and foxes must be good because otherwise the fur would not be of high quality. The fact is that years of selective breeding for fur quality have produced animals whose fur quality is less sensitive to welfare conditions. The breeding has been focusing on fur quality, and as a result new welfare problems, such as obesity and leg weakness in foxes, have occurred.³

2)

CALM ANIMALS ON FUR FARMS MAY SUFFER THE MOST

If a mink does not show stereotypies it is not a signal of better welfare.⁴ Studies have shown higher levels of stress hormones in passive minks than in minks with stereotypic behavior⁵, as stereotypies can be a way to cope with the stressful situation. The "calm" minks on fur farms may actually be the ones that are suffering the most.

3)

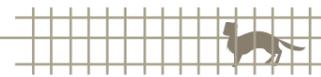
IS THE FUR INDUSTRY NOT IMPROVING ANIMAL WELFARE?

Studies aimed at improving housing conditions have, on the whole, been conceived and conducted within the framework of the standard cage environment.⁶ This is also the problem with the fur industry's own animal welfare indicators – they are based upon the caging systems of today. Any significant improvements in animal welfare would mean unprofitability for the fur industry. Hence, the fur industry should not be given the responsibility of improving the welfare of animals kept for fur production purposes.

IN NATURE



ON FUR FARMS



Minks

- Minks are solitary and territorial predators.
- Minks cover large territories, usually between 1-3 km.⁷ The territories stretch along water where they hunt.⁸
- The mink is semi-aquatic. Swimming and diving are highly significant aspects of the mink lifestyle.^{9/10}
- Stereotypies, such as fur chewing and circling in the cage, are unknown in the wild.¹¹

- The solitary mink is kept in close vicinity to other animals.
- Minks are kept in wire mesh battery cages typically measuring 90x30x45 cm with no possibility to express their hunting behavior.
- Deprivation of swimming water results in the same stress level as deprivation of food.¹²
- Some minks on every farm show self-mutilation and many show high levels of stereotypic behavior, which indicates that the welfare of the animals is compromised.¹³

Foxes

- The territory of the red fox ranges from 0,5 to 10 km².¹⁴ The arctic fox has a mean home range of 20-30 km².¹⁵
- An adult red fox covers -10 km daily.¹⁶ The arctic fox is able to migrate more than 100 km in one season.¹⁷
- Foxes have dens with many tunnels.
- In nature foxes form pairs and live in family groups.¹⁸

- These wide ranging predators are kept one animal per wire mesh battery cage measuring 0,8-1,2 m².¹⁹
- The wire mesh cages make the expression of species specific behaviour such as running, playing and exploring impossible.²⁰
- The wire mesh cages make digging and natural social interaction impossible.

