

#FURFREEIRELAND



FUR FARMING IN IRELAND

Background

- There are currently three mink farms in Ireland (one each in Donegal, Laois and Kerry) – down from five in 2009.
- These three farms breed and kill approximately 150,000 mink a year.
- A number of fur farms in Ireland have gone out of business in recent years. Official inspectorate records show that these three fur farms employ few permanent members of staff.
- Examples from elsewhere in Europe have shown that successful fur farming bans do not have a negative economic impact, with farms receiving compensation, phase out periods and chances for diversification.
- Fur farming is not a traditional Irish rural industry whose heritage needs to be preserved. In fact only one fur farm is owned by an Irish family, the others are owned by parent companies originating elsewhere in Europe.



Welfare problems of battery cages

Mink, the only species of animal currently reared in fur factory farms in Ireland, are active wide-ranging carnivores and inherently unsuitable to be kept in wire mesh battery cages. They are semi-aquatic, but in fur farms are deprived of access to water for swimming, bathing or hunting.

Mink bred for their fur are still essentially wild and their behavioural needs cannot be met on fur farms.

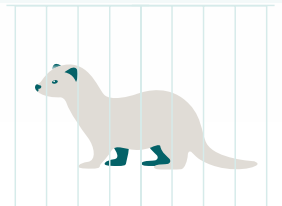
Animals kept for fur have been subjected to relatively little active selection for tameness and adaptability to captive environments.¹

The battery cage system deprives animals of the opportunity to express their species-specific range of behaviours.



IN NATURE:

- A mink's home range can be up to 3 km² or as much as 7.5 km along rivers or coasts²
- Mink are solitary animals
- Semi-aquatic, swimming and diving are highly significant aspects of their lifestyle³
- In the wild, mink do not perform stereotyped, repetitive pacing or chew their own fur or tails⁴



ON FUR FARMS:

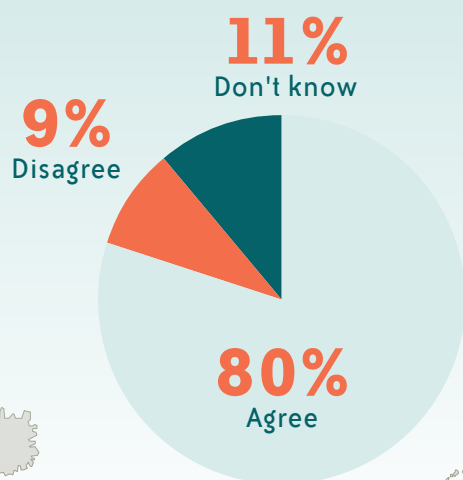
- Mink spend their entire lives in a wire mesh battery cage typically measuring 90x30x45 cm
- Live extremely near other mink unable to avoid social contact
- Cannot run, swim nor hunt
- Stereotyped behaviours, fur chewing, and injuries from fighting are common
- Deprivation of swimming water results in the same stress level as deprivation of food⁵

#FURFREEIRELAND



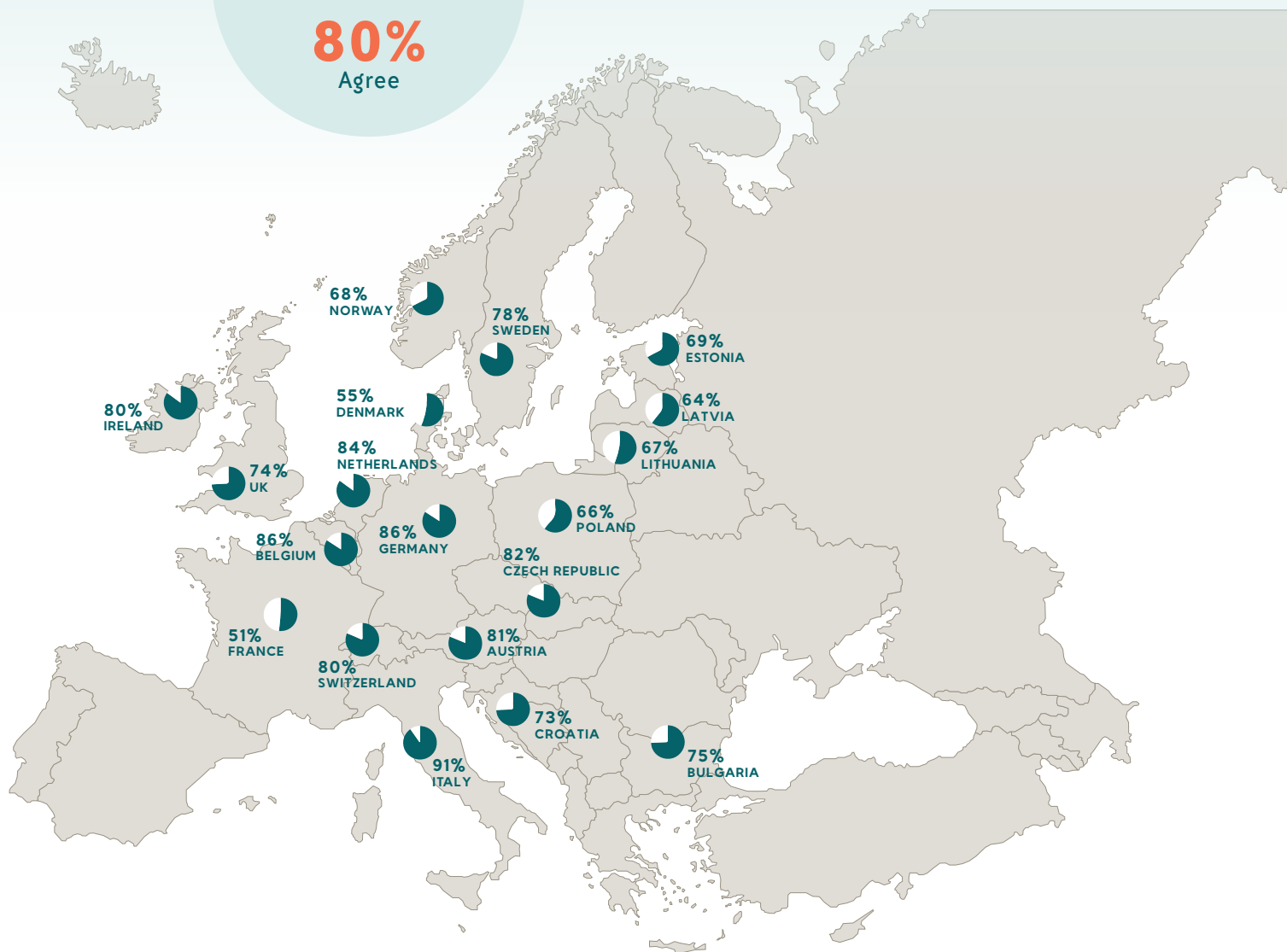
Public Opinion

An opinion poll of people in Ireland conducted by Red C Research in October 2018 showed that **80% agree that farming and killing of animals for their fur in Ireland should be banned.**



In July 2013, The Journal newspaper conducted an online poll asking: 'Should we ban fur farming in Ireland?'. 79% of more than 13 thousand respondents said 'Yes'.

Opinion polls have consistently shown that the majority of citizens in other EU countries also find it unacceptable to breed and kill animals for their fur (see Appendix).



#FURFREEIRELAND



Fur farming puts biodiversity at risk

Fur farming has been an important pathway for the introduction of invasive alien species (IAS), which can cause significant damage to native biodiversity.

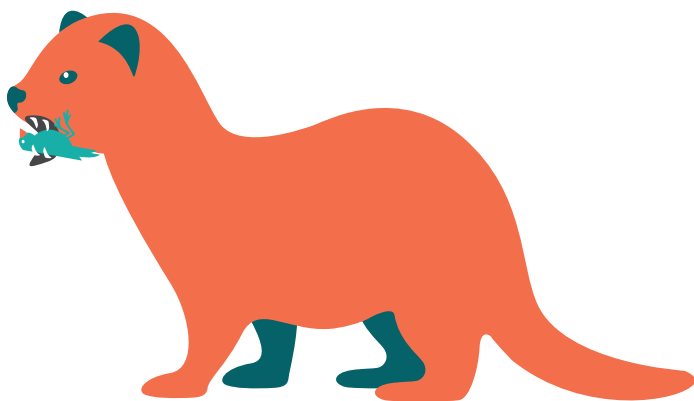
American mink, a species that were introduced by escapes from fur farms - are included on the list of the 100 worst invasive alien species in Europe.^{6,7}

Feral populations of mink are found in more than 20 European countries, including Ireland, and the numbers are increasing.^{8,9}

Feral mink can have a severe impact on ground-nesting bird populations, rodents and amphibians.¹⁰

In Ireland, escaped mink are widespread and have a significant impact on ground nesting birds, including seabirds and waders. First recorded in the wild in Ireland in 1961 and in stable population by the 1980's, NPWS is constantly involved in the control and management at huge cost.¹¹

In the UK, predation by the mink has been identified as an important cause for the serious depletion of the water vole.¹²



#FURFREEIRELAND

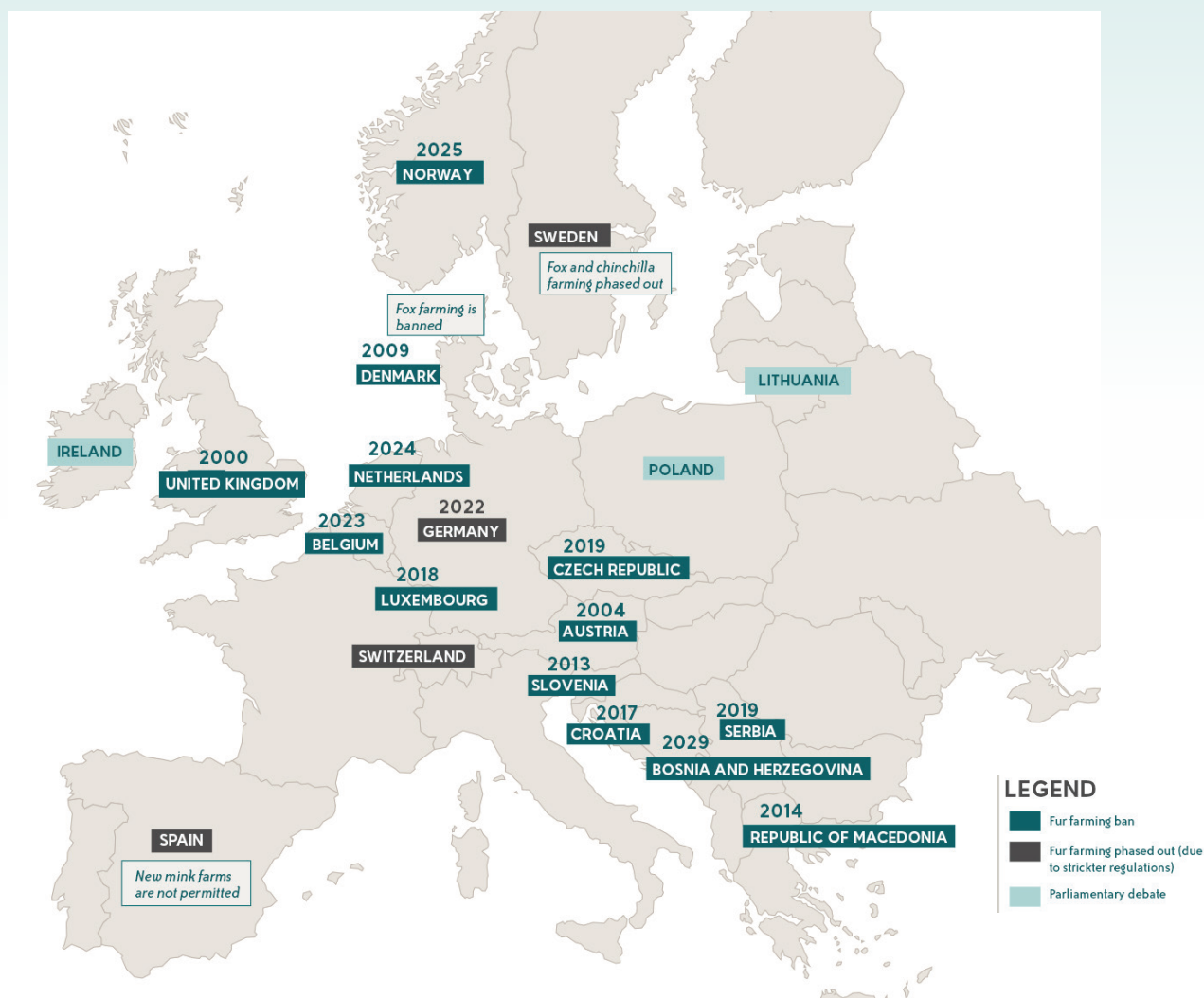


Fur bans across Europe

The tide is turning against the practice of fur production within the EU as concerns about animal welfare and the ethics of fur continue to grow. Many EU member states have already adopted legislation to prohibit or limit fur farming, but further measures are needed.

“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.”

UK Ministry of Agriculture in 2000



“Raising animals, encaged solely for the production of luxury objects, is no more of our time.”

Bianca Debaets, State Secretary of the Brussels-Capital Region (2015)

“Causing suffering and taking the life of an animal for a non-essential and even trivial reason cannot be morally justified. It contravenes public morality in the Netherlands.”

Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (2016)

#FURFREEIRELAND



The conditions on fur farms are similar worldwide

A systematic analysis of the legislation in Denmark, Norway and China has shown that the legislation for fur farming does not significantly differ between Europe and China.¹³

On a fundamental level, fur farming leads to similar welfare problems all over the world as the animals are denied the ability to express many of their species-specific behaviours.¹⁴

There is no evidence that fur farming prohibitions in Europe increase fur production in China.

China already counts for more than half of the world's fur production.¹⁵ The European fur industry has contributed to the growth of Chinese fur farming, through their marketing of fur and fur production in China.¹⁶

As the ethical awareness of animal welfare issues grows worldwide, young people in China are becoming increasingly aware of animal welfare issues.

European nations should take global leadership on animal welfare by banning fur farming.



FUR FARMING DOES NOT CREATE STABLE JOBS IN EUROPE

Despite the fur trade's propaganda, fur farming is a small sector in the EU and employment opportunities on fur farms are relatively limited, and most often seasonal in nature. As the tide is turning against the practice of fur production, the fact is that fur farming is an increasingly unstable industry, both economically and politically.

FUR FARMING DOES NOT CONTRIBUTE TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EU

Fur farming does not contribute to positive synergy effects on tourism, technology development or on the landscape. Due to the environmental problems (including the unpleasant odour around fur farms), the chance of developing the area in terms of tourism are reduced, local residents may be affected and investments may be hindered.¹⁷

CLOSING DOWN FUR FARMS DOES NOT CAUSE HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT

As the number of fur farms in many countries decreases, the existing fur farms are becoming bigger, but are not necessarily employing more people.¹⁸ The fur industry used to estimate the number of full-time jobs to be 10 full-time jobs per fur farm.¹⁹ This number is likely an overestimation and mainly refers to indirect jobs. Figures from Sweden and Norway give an average of 3 workers per fur farm.^{20,21} There is little evidence that the closure of fur farms has led to significant unemployment.²²

FURFREEIRELAND



Success of the UK Ban

Fur farming was banned in England and Wales in 2000, and in Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2002. The bans were achieved on the basis that fur farming is at odds with public morality.

The ban was the result of a comprehensive consultation process, in which the strength of public opposition to the fur industry was noted and the inability of fur farming to meet the most basic animal welfare obligations was scientifically recognised.

The UK ban on fur farming is a strong and successful piece of legislation, ensuring that the overwhelming moral objection by the British public to fur farming is protected.

One Scottish fur farm became a successful strawberry grower after it closed.

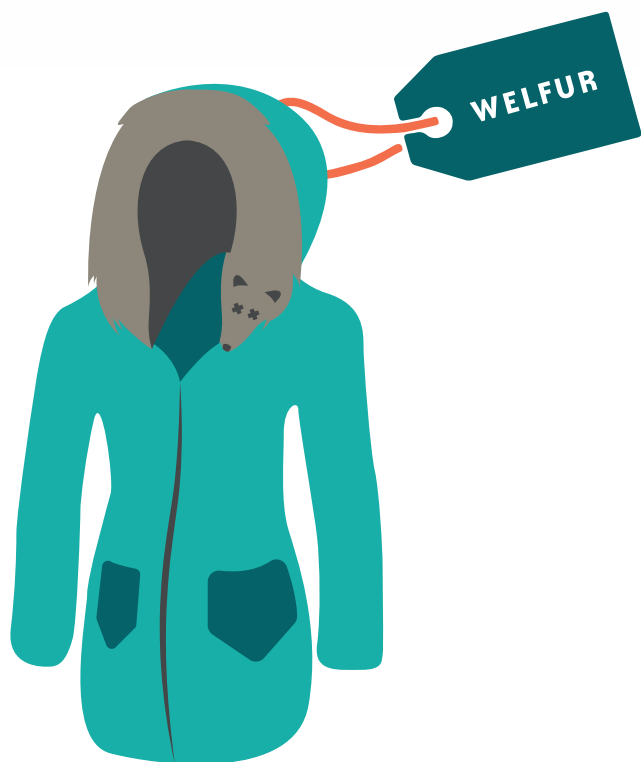
Fur Industry Propaganda

The fur industry is represented by various trade bodies which can be compared to tobacco industry lobbyists or sponsored climate change deniers, both of which are narrow, self-interest groups whose aims are to defend certain practices and stave off legislation or regulation aimed at limiting their damaging activities and protecting the public.

Recent initiatives such as WelFur – the fur industry's latest scheme that tries to put a gloss on their cruel practices – can be seen in this context.

The WelFur scheme is being promoted by the fur industry, despite being comprehensively debunked by the recent report by Respect for Animals: 'The Case Against Fur Factory Farming: A Scientific Review of Animal Welfare Standards and 'WelFur'.

Drawing on the best and most up to date science, the report concludes: 'WelFur is not able to address the major welfare issues for mink and foxes farmed for fur, nor the serious inadequacies in current labelling and regulation'.





CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that fur farming is cruel.

In addition:

- Fur farming does not comply with either European Directive 98/58/EC (concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes) or the Council of Europe Recommendation Concerning Fur Animals.
- Directive 98/58/EC states: “No animal shall be kept for farming purposes unless it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of its genotype or phenotype, that it can be kept without detrimental effect on its health or welfare.”
- The Council of Europe Recommendation Concerning Fur Animals is clear. It says: “No animal shall be kept for its fur if: a. the conditions of this Recommendation cannot be met, or if b. The animal belongs to a species whose members, despite these conditions being met, cannot adapt to captivity without welfare problems.” The evidence shows that the conditions of the recommendation cannot be met.
- In 2001 the European Commission’s Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare concluded that “Current husbandry systems cause serious problems for all species of animals reared for fur.” The fur trade has made no significant attempts to bring in any changes to the way these animals are bred and killed.
- 8 out of 10 people in Ireland think that fur farming should be banned.

RECOMMENDATION

The fact is that fur farming is cruel, the fur industry is incapable of making it humane.

A ban on fur farming in Ireland should be introduced as soon as possible on animal welfare, ethical and moral grounds.



#FURFREEIRELAND



APPENDIX

AUSTRIA

81% of Austrian citizens consider it wrong to kill animals for fur products (Integral Survey/Four Paws, 2014)

BELGIUM

86% favour a ban on breeding animals for their fur (Ipson/GAIA, 2012)

CROATIA

73% agree that breeding animals for fur should be legally banned in Croatia (SPEM Communication Group, Animal Friends Croatia, 2006)

CZECH REPUBLIC

82% of the Czech citizens do not agree with killing animals for fur (FOCUS Marketing and Social research/Svoboda Zvirat, 2017)

DENMARK

55% of Danes are against the production of fur (YouGov, 2017)

ESTONIA

69% disapprove of the raising and killing of wild animals for fur (National omnibus survey by Kantar Emor/LOOMUS, 2016)

FRANCE

51% of French citizens think the breeding of animals for fur should end (Ipsos/OneVoice, 2017)

GERMANY

86% of German citizens consider it wrong to kill animals for fur products (Integral/Four Paws Germany 2014)

ITALY

91% of Italian citizens are against the activities linked to the production of fur using animals (EURISPES "Italy Report", 2015)

LATVIA

64% of the Latvian population does not support raising and killing animals for fur (SolidData/Dzīvnieku brīvība, 2015)

LITHUANIA

67% of the Lithuanian citizens consider it unacceptable to raise and kill animals for fur (Vilmorus, Tušči narvai, 2016)

THE NETHERLANDS

84% of the Dutch population consider fur farming unacceptable (Motivaction/Bont voor Dieren, 2015)

NORWAY

68% of Norwegians think fur farming is wrong (Infact/Dyrevernalliansen 2014)

POLAND

66% think the breeding of foxes, raccoon dogs and minks for their fur should not be allowed. In the age group 18-35, 70% supports a ban. (Instytut Badań Rynkowych i Społecznych (IBRiS) Homo Homini/Otwarte Klatki, 2015)

SWEDEN

78% think it should not be allowed to breed mink in cages for fur (Demoskop/Djurens Rätt, 2014)

SWITZERLAND

80% of Swiss citizens consider it wrong to kill animals for fur products (Integral/Four Paws 2014)

UK

74% think that using animals for the production of fur for the fashion industry is wrong (YouGov, Four Paws UK, 2014)



#FURFREE IRELAND



NOTES

- 1 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.
- 2 Nimon, A.J. & Broom, D.M. (1999) The welfare of farmed mink (*Mustela vison*) in relation to housing and management: a review. *Animal Welfare* 8: 205-228.
- 3 Poole, T.B & Dunstone, N. (1976): Underwater predatory behaviour of the American mink (*Mustela vison*). *Journal of Zoology*, 178:395-412.
- 4 Nimon & Broom.
- 5 Mason, Cooper & Clarebrough (2001) Frustrations in fur-farmed mink. *Nature* 410: 35-36.
- 6 DAISIE database: <http://www.europe-aliens.org/speciesTheWorst.do> (last accessed 05.11.2017)
- 7 Bonesi, L. & Palazón, S. (2007). The American mink in Europe: Status, impacts, and control. *Biological Conservation*. 134. 470-483.
- 8 Bonesi, L. & Palazón, S. 470-483.
- 9 Hegyeli, Z. & Kecskes, A. (2014) The occurrence of wild-living American Mink *Neovison vison* in Transylvania, Romania. *Small Carnivore Conservation*, 51: 23-28.
- 10 Bonesi, L. & Palazón, S. 470-483.
- 11 Roy, S., Reid, N., McDonald, R.A. (2009) A review of mink predation and control in Ireland. *Irish Wildlife Manuals*, No. 40. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin, Ireland.
- 12 Rushton, S. P., Barreto, G. W., Cormack, R. M., Macdonald, D. W. and Fuller, R. 2000. Modelling the effects of mink (*Mustela vison*) and habitat fragmentation on the water vole. - *Journal of Applied Ecology* 37: 475-490.
- 13 Dahlback, M. & Kleiveland, L. (2014) En sammanliggning av regelverket for pelsdyroppdrett i Kina, Norge og Danmark, Fagnotat Dyrevernalliansen.
- 14 NOAH & Animalia (2015) Case Saga Furs. *Nordic Fur Trade - Marketed as Responsible Business*.
- 15 China Daily. "Official statistics key to China's fur farming industry." [Chinadaily.com.cn. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2015-08/20/content_21659731.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2015-08/20/content_21659731.htm) (accessed January 11, 2018)
- 16 Noah & Animalia.
- 17 Bijleveld, M., Korteland, M. & Sevenster, M. (CE Delft, 2011) *The Environmental Impact Mink Fur Production*
- 18 Besluit van de Deputatie van de provincie Oost-Vlaanderen, 15 March 2007. In: *De Argumenten van de Bontindustrie: Weerlegd*. (GAIA, 2008)
- 19 European Fur Breeders Association, 2008 Annual Report.
- 20 Hovland & Boe (2012) *Pelsdyrhold i Norge- avvikling, arbeidsforbruk og selskapsform*. Norsk institutt for landbruk-sokonomisk forskning.
- 21 SOU 2003:86 *Djurens välfärd och pälsdjursnäringen*: www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2003/10/sou-200386/ (accessed January 11, 2018)
- 22 Hovland & Boe.