



Prime Minister Sánchez
Complejo de la Moncloa
Avda. Puerta de Hierro
s/n. 28071 Madrid

Cc Sr. D. Planas, Minister of Agriculture; Sra. Dña. Teresa Ribera Rodríguez, Minister of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenges

Subject: *Call for action to the Spanish Government to support the banning of fur farming in Spain*

Madrid, 5 May 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you on behalf of the Fur Free Alliance, an international coalition of more than fifty animal protection organisations who work together to end the exploitation and killing of animals for their fur. We believe that fur factory farming is inherently cruel and encourage governments around the world to bring about legislation to end this practice.

We are encouraged to hear that a prohibition on the breeding of animals for their fur skins in Spain is presently proposed as part of the Spanish Animal Protection Bill in the Spanish Parliament. The Fur Free Alliance respectfully urges the Spanish Government to commit to adopting this forward-thinking and widely-supported legislation to end the inhumane and unnecessary fur trade in Spain. We urge you to ensure all animals raised for their fur, for instance chinchillas, are explicitly included in the legislation, as supported by our Spanish member organisation Tu Abrigo Su Vida.

Recent polling conducted by Ipsos in Spain shows that a considerable majority (76%) of Spanish citizens are supportive of a prohibition on the breeding and killing of animals for fur.¹

Fur farming is not only of great concern from an animal welfare perspective, it also raises serious concerns regarding the environment and, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, public health too.

Around the globe, the tide is turning against the brutal fur trade. Over the past two decades, 17 countries have taken legislative action to ban and phase-out the inhumane practice of fur production, including France, Norway, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.² Besides Spain, other countries that are presently considering to prohibit fur production are Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria.

The demand for fur is also decreasing. In recent years, a large number of major international fashion brands including Gucci, Prada, Versace, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana and Balenciaga have rejected the use of animal

¹ Survey conducted by market research company Ipsos (Spain, 2021)

² <https://www.furfreealliance.com/fur-bans/>



fur, instead transitioning instead to other materials, which are more humane and better for the environment.

On fur factory farms around the world, millions of mink, foxes and other wild animals spend their entire lives in cramped cages, deprived of the ability to engage in natural behaviours, only to be cruelly gassed or electrocuted to death. The evidence that fur farming violates basic animal welfare needs is overwhelming. Investigations have consistently recorded serious animal health problems that are inherent to the battery housing system on fur farms, such as self-mutilation, infected wounds, cannibalism and stress-related stereotypical behaviour.

Waste runoff from fur farms is a major pollution problem, contaminating soil and waterways and causing a decrease of local biodiversity. Consequently, the local impact of intensive fur farms leads to the degradation of land, rural life, property values and economic activities.³ Given the significant damage to local fauna caused by the invasive American mink, escapees from fur farms, the establishment of new mink fur farms in Spain has been prohibited since 2016.⁴ The economic costs associated with the intensive control of feral populations of American mink escapees, ongoing since 2021, is estimated at 1.8 million euros annually in Spain.⁵

In addition to being inherently inhumane, the confinement of thousands of animals in unsanitary, crowded and stressful conditions is a breeding ground for infectious diseases. Mink are highly susceptible to COVID-19, which spreads rapidly on intensive fur farms. To date, over 470 mink fur farms in Europe and North America have been infected. Health authorities such as the World Health Organisation have warned mink fur farms are a COVID-19 risk to humans and wildlife, and researchers have expressed concerns that mink-related variant viruses could reduce the efficacy of vaccines. A paper published in *Frontiers of Veterinary Science*, in January 2022, concluded “...farmed minks could constitute a relevant reservoir of the virus since the presence of asymptomatic individuals, as occurred in the Spanish outbreak, could [make] difficult the detection of SARS-CoV-2 infection, and thus contribute to virus spread among minks and humans.”⁶ Further, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) has stated that raw mink skins “cannot be considered as a safe commodity for international trade.”⁷

In Spain, mink on 18 out of a total of 26 fur farms have been infected with COVID-19. Since the first outbreak in 2020 which saw the culling of 92.700 mink, costing 1.551.482€⁸, economic expenditure has been on the rise to implement the ‘Programa Nacional de Prevención, Vigilancia y Control del SARS-CoV-2 en Granjas de

³ <https://www.furfreealliance.com/environment-and-health/>

⁴ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2016-5901>

⁵ https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/publicaciones/pbl_exo_inva_vison_americano_tcm30-69978.pdf

⁶ SARS-CoV-2 Outbreak on a Spanish Mink Farm: Epidemiological, Molecular, and Pathological Studies.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2021.805004/full>

⁷ <https://www.oie.int/app/uploads/2021/04/a-ahg-report-covid19-dec2020-feb2021.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.heraldo.es/noticias/aragon/teruel/2021/11/10/la-dga-indemnizara-con-1-5-millones-el-sacrificio-de-92-700-visones-en-la-puebla-de-valverde-por-la-covid-1532644.html>



Visones'. The special surveillance measures introduced for the 17 mink farms infected in 2021, 15 of which are located in Galicia, has resulted in the expenditure of over 30.260€⁹ of public money to date.¹⁰

Fur farming is an increasingly unstable industry, both economically and politically. In the past decade, the global fur trade is experiencing a significant economic decline. Around the globe, pelt prices have plummeted with growing stockpiles of unsold furskins. The world's largest auctioneer, Copenhagen Fur showed a long-term decline in mink prices, from €59 per pelt in December 2013, to €19 in September 2020.¹¹ The global COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine has dealt further major blows to the fur trade.¹²

In Spain, fur farming is a relatively small sector and employment opportunities are limited, most often part-time and seasonal in nature. Instead of supporting a small declining industry, we respectfully urge the Spanish government to end this practice and introduce a programme to transition workers to more sustainable, forward-looking industries with better economic prospects.

There has never been a more urgent need to end the practice of fur farming, an industry that not only treats animals inhumanely for a product no-one needs, but has also been shown to provide an opportunity for zoonotic spillover of COVID-19 from farmed mink to humans, create conditions for a potential animal reservoir of COVID-19, and may also be the breeding ground for future outbreaks of new emerging diseases.

We, the members of the Fur Free Alliance, strongly encourage you to be on the right side of history and prohibit the breeding of animals for their fur skins in Spain at the earliest possible opportunity.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of our request. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require additional information, or would like to discuss this important matter in greater detail.

Yours faithfully,

Joh Vinding
Chairman of the Fur Free Alliance
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⁹ <https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:d21656c1-193b-33d3-82bc-9a4eed47d4a1>

¹⁰ https://www.mapa.gob.es/es/ganaderia/temas/sanidad-animal-higiene-ganadera/programaprevencionvigilanciaycontrols-ars-cov-2engranjasdevison_tcm30-556241.pdf

¹¹ <https://agriwatch.dk/Nyheder/Landbrug/article12103042.ece>

¹² <https://www.sagafurs.com/corporate/news/saga-furs-cooperative-negotiations-have-been-concluded-and-the-reorganization-of-operations-begins/>



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The Fur Free Alliance is an international coalition of over 50 animal protection organisations representing millions of supporters worldwide.

The Fur Free Alliance is represented by:





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- ACTAsia
- Anima
- Anima Mundi
- Animal Friends Croatia
- Animal Rights Center (ARC)
- Animalia
- ANIMAL
- Beauty without Cruelty
- Bont voor Dieren
- Campaigns and Activism for the Animals in Industry (CAAI)
- Deutscher Tierschutzbund
- Djurens Rätt
- Dyrenes Alliance
- Ecoetika
- EVA
- FOUR PAWS Australia
- FOUR PAWS Bulgaria
- FOUR PAWS South-Africa
- FOUR PAWS USA
- VIER PFOTEN Austria
- VIER PFOTEN Germany
- GAIA
- Galop
- HSI Canada
- HSI/Europe - Italy
- HSI/Europe - Poland
- HSI/Europe - Romania
- HSI United Kingdom
- The Humane Society of the United States
- Humányy Pokrok
- Hungarian Anti-Fur League (Magyar Szórmellenes Liga)
- JAVA
- Last Chance for Animals
- LAV
- Loomus
- NOAH
- Oikeutta Eläimille
- One Voice
- Open Cages Belarus
- Tusti Narvai
- Open Cages Russia
- Open Cages Ukraine
- Otwarte Klatki
- Respect for Animals
- RSPCA
- Sloboda za Životinje
- Svoboda zvířat (Freedom for Animals)
- Swiss Animal Protection (SAP)
- The Fur-Bearers
- Tu Abrigo Su Vida
- UAnimals
- Unique Planet
- VEGAIA
- Voices for Animals
- World Animal Net