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President Gitanas Nausėda
Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania
S. Daukanto a. 3
LT-01122
Vilnius
Lithuania

Kopenhagen, 21 September 2023

In support of a ban on fur farming in Lithuania

Dear President Gitanas Nausėda,

I am writing 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 are clear that fur factory farming is inherently cruel and we encourage governments around the world to bring about legislation to end this practice.

We are delighted that the proposed ban on fur farming in Lithuania passed the final vote in the Seimas yesterday. We now respectfully urge you to swiftly sign the bill into law.

It is not possible for the welfare needs of animals farmed for fur to be met on fur farms. The ability to express their natural behaviour is seriously compromised by fur farming systems, which fail to satisfy the five freedoms contained in the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes. The caged systems on fur farms mean that animal suffering including self-mutilation, infected wounds, cannibalism and stress-related stereotypical behaviour is regularly recorded.

Earlier this year, an investigation into shocking cage conditions and cruel killing practices on fur farms in Lithuania received coverage by international media outlets. The investigation revealed animals punched, thrown, and suffocated in gas chambers, and for the first time depicted distressing footage of dying mink from inside a killing box.

Not only do fur farms cause unacceptable animal cruelty, evidence shows that the conditions on fur farms can act as reservoirs for deadly viruses. Outbreaks of COVID-19 on hundreds of mink farms in Europe, including recorded cases of mink to human transmission, raised serious public health concerns.



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Alarmingly, scientists have also raised concerns about mutations of avian flu recently found on Finnish fur farms. Authorities in Finland have this month ordered all animals to be killed on fur farms found to be infected by avian influenza, equating to the culling of hundreds of thousands of animals. In July 2023, the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned that the increase in cases of avian flu among mammals could make it easier for the virus to spread to humans.

Fur farms have already been banned in 19 European countries, including by two other Baltic countries, Estonia and Latvia. This year 1.5 million signatures were submitted to the European Commission calling for an end to fur farming across the EU, making the 'Fur Free Europe' European Citizens' Initiative the most successful ECI relating to animal welfare in history. **Lithuania had one of the highest threshold percentage of signatures in Europe, at 640%.**

A ban on fur farming is essential to advance animal welfare and protect public health, and has strong public support. Having successfully completed passage through the Seimas, we consider this to be an historic moment for the improvement of animal welfare in Lithuania and Europe, a moment which is attracting international attention.

Hopefully, thanks to your signature, Lithuania will be on the right side of history. We look forward to welcoming Lithuania to the growing list of European countries who have ended the cruelty of fur farming.

Yours faithfully,

Joh Vinding
Chairman of the Fur Free Alliance