

WHY FUR FARMING SHOULD BE BANNED IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

There are currently 5 licensed mink farms operating in the Republic of Ireland and it is estimated that, between these farms, a total of 225,000 mink are farmed*. One of the farms used to also farm foxes for fur. Fox farming (silver and arctic foxes) is still legal in the Republic of Ireland.

(*Deputy Shane McEntee, Seanad Éireann Debate 25/10/2011)

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WELFARE PROBLEMS ON FUR FARMS

Confined in cages Farmed mink are confined in rows of small wire mesh cages until they are killed (at about 6 months old). They are caged all the time and never get out for exercise. In these cages, it is impossible for mink to carry out important natural behaviours, such as swimming and diving.

When foxes were farmed in Ireland, they were also confined in small cages, unable to carry out important natural behaviours, such as digging. Fox farming is still legal in the Republic of Ireland.

Fur animals not fully domesticated Though bred on the farm, farmed mink and foxes are not fully domesticated like other farm animals, such as cattle and pigs. Also, mink and foxes are not naturally herd or flock animals. They are therefore totally unsuitable for commercial farming, where they are reared intensively in cages, unable to carry out important natural behaviours and unable to live in the solitary way that is natural for them.

No swimming water for farmed mink Mink in the wild always live near water, and swimming and diving are important natural behaviours for mink. On mink farms, there is no water for swimming. Digging is an important natural behaviour for foxes but this is not possible for farmed foxes.

A major European Commission report* about the welfare of animals on fur farms concluded:

“The typical mink cage with a nest box and wire mesh floor impairs mink welfare because it does not provide for important needs.”

“The typical fox cage does not provide for important needs of foxes.”

(* “The Welfare of Animals Kept for Fur Production”, by the European Commission’s Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare, December 2001.)

Slaughter problems Farmed mink and foxes are killed on the farm. A report by the Irish Government’s Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare identified serious slaughter problems.

(The report can be read at www.fawac.ie)

It is our view that there is no practical, humane way of rearing mink or foxes on a commercial scale. Therefore, we believe that fur farming should be banned.

Fur farming is already illegal in Northern Ireland (and in Britain and Austria). Compassion in World Farming – Ireland is urging the Irish Government to ban fur farming in the Republic of Ireland without delay.