

2022-11-03

The Minister for Rural Affairs  
Peter Kullgren  
Regeringskansliet  
103 33 Stockholm

# Call for action to the Swedish Government to support the banning of fur farming in Sweden

Dear Mr Kullgren,

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 encourage governments around the world to bring about legislation to end this practice.

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.

In 2021, the remaining 29 Swedish mink farms were subject to a breeding ban because of the spread of SARS-CoV-2. The breeding ban caused economical struggle for the farms and also cost money to the taxpayer via the government funded compensation scheme for farmers and the costs of monitoring the virus on fur farms.

There are already no fox or chinchilla farms in Sweden, only mink farms remain active. We do not believe it is possible for any animals raised for their fur to be able to behave naturally, as stated in the animal welfare act,<sup>1</sup> and therefore we believe the only course of action is for the government to end the practice completely.

The Fur Free Alliance respectfully urges the Swedish Government to commit to phase out the mink farms for good as soon as possible, through adopting the widely-supported legislation to ban fur farming in Sweden. Recent polling conducted by Novus in Sweden shows that a

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<sup>1</sup> Djurskyddslag (2018:1192).

considerable majority (76%) of Swedish citizens are supportive of a prohibition on the breeding and killing of minks for fur.<sup>2</sup>

Around the globe, the tide is turning against the brutal fur trade. Over the past two decades, almost 20 countries have taken legislative action to ban the inhumane practice of fur production, including France, Norway, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Sweden is one of the few European countries that still allows fur production.

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

Investigations, scientists and animal welfare controls by authorities 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. In 2021, no animal welfare controls were made in Sweden on mink farms, enabling hidden suffering.<sup>4</sup>

The local impact of intensive fur farms also leads to the degradation of land, rural life, property values and economic activities.<sup>5</sup> In 2020 a “fly inspector” was hired in Blekinge, to tackle the increasing problem with flies in the areas where mink farms are most common in Sweden.<sup>6</sup>

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 SARS-CoV-2, which spreads rapidly on intensive fur farms. In Sweden, minks on at least 23 fur farms, out of 26 tested, have been infected with SARS-CoV-2.<sup>7</sup> Since the first outbreak in 2020, Swedish public money has been used to test minks for disease and implement restrictions related to the breeding ban. In addition, in 2021, more than 5,5 million euro was paid to farmers as compensation for the temporary ban. That money could better have been used to assist the transition of workers and ban the fur farms permanently.

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<sup>2</sup> Survey conducted by the research company Novus (Sweden, April 2021), ordered by the member organisation Djurens Rätt.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.furfreealliance.com/fur-bans/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.djurensratt.se/blogg/dolt-lidande-inga-djurskyddskontroller-pa-minkfarmer-2021>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.furfreealliance.com/environment-and-health/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/7413541>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.sva.se/media/8da4556bda367fa/mink-associated-infections-with-sars-cov-2-2020.pdf>

In Sweden, fur farming is a relatively small sector and employment opportunities are limited, most often part-time and seasonal in nature, with at most 60 people full-time employed. Instead of supporting a small declining industry, we respectfully urge the Swedish 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 SARS-CoV-2 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 Sweden 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

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:



- 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
- Humánný Pokrok
- Hungarian Anti-Fur League (Magyar Szőrmellenes 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 zviřat (Freedom for Animals)
- Swiss Animal Protection (SAP)
- The Fur-Bearers
- Tu Abrigo Su Vida
- UAnimals
- Unique Planet
- VEGAIA
- Voices for Animals
- World Animal Net