

Can we count on your support to end fur farming in Canada?

The Fur-Bearers is a non-partisan charity formed in 1953 that works to protect fur-bearing animals in the wild and in confinement through conservation, advocacy, research and education. The brief provides an overview of fur farming in Canada and the recent legislation introduced to prohibit the practice.

Background

Fur farming is an intensive farming practice that confines wild animals in small, wire cages before they are killed and skinned for their fur. Mink are the most commonly farmed animal in Canada, followed by foxes. Other fur-bearing animals such as chinchillas and rabbits are also farmed for their fur. Fur farms are large industrial operations where as many as tens of thousands of animals are kept on a single farm. Over one million animals were killed on fur farms in Canada in 2020. The end product, fur pelts, are sold on the domestic or international markets to be used in the luxury fashion industry.

Current situation

Canada's fur farm industry has seen significant declines in recent years. In 2010, there were over 300 fur farms in the country. Statistics Canada data shows only 27 fox farms were operating in 2018 (the last year this data was compiled)¹, while Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada estimates that only 63 mink farms remained in 2020.² Today, the number of both mink and fox farms is expected to be far lower. Ontario and Nova Scotia are the largest producers of farmed fur. British Columbia was among the top producers, however, in 2021, the Government of British Columbia introduced a phase-out of mink farming due to the public health risks associated with COVID-19.³

Problems

Animal Welfare

Animals farmed for their fur develop physical and psychological conditions due their extreme confinement. Behavioural abnormalities include stereotypies (pacing along cage walls, repetitive circling, head-bobbing, repeatedly entering/exiting their nest boxes) and self-mutilation (chewing on their own tails, limbs, excessive grooming). Animals in fur farms can become aggressive towards themselves and each other, and some are driven to cannibalism, a disturbing behaviour that has been observed on Canadian fur farms. National industry standard practices for killing animals on fur farms are gas chambers (mink) and anal electrocution (foxes).⁴



Fox in a cage on a Quebec fur farm

1 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210011601>

2 <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/canadas-agriculture-sectors/animal-industry/red-meat-and-livestock-market-information/mink-statistical-briefer>

3 <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021AFF0066-002112>

4 <https://www.nfacc.ca/>

Public Health

The fur farming sector is an ongoing threat to public health due to the rapid transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus among farmed mink, animal-to-human and human-to-animal transmission of the virus, development of mink-associated variants, and the risk of virus spillover from fur farmed animals to wildlife populations. In July 2021, British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer issued a moratorium on mink farming due to the danger the sector posed to fur farm workers and the broader public. This was followed by an announcement of a complete phase-out of mink farming by the Government of British Columbia in November of 2021.

Several countries moved to end fur farming during the COVID-19 pandemic, including Italy (2021), France (2021), Estonia (2021), Ireland (2020), and the Netherlands (2020).

Solutions

Prohibition on fur farming in Canada

Bill C-247, *An Act to prohibit fur farming*, was introduced in the House of Commons by MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith on February 8, 2022.⁵ If passed, this bill would move Canada in line with numerous other countries that have banned fur farming including the United Kingdom, Norway, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, and many more.⁶

Fur farm workers should be supported to move into ethical and sustainable employment sectors, while fur farm operations can be converted into sustainable forms of plant agriculture that would support Canada's climate and food security goals. A model example is British Columbia's transition supports project, which allows fur farm workers to gain training for employment in the greenhouse sector.⁷

Public support

A Research Co. poll commissioned by The Fur-Bearers in February 2022 found that 74% of Canadians would support a nationwide ban on fur farming.⁸ Majorities of Canadians who voted for any of the three major parties in the 2021 federal election are in favour of a ban on fur farming:

- 80% among those who supported the New Democratic Party (NDP)
- 73% among those who backed the Liberal Party
- 71% among those who cast ballots for the Conservative Party

More information

Detailed information about fur farming can be found on The Fur-Bearers website at www.TheFurBearers.com including polling results, photos and videos of Canadian fur farms, sector statistics, and fur farming's harmful impacts on animals, the environment, and public health.

Learn more or let us know if you plan to support this bill by contacting us at info@TheFurBearers.com.

⁵ <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/bill/C-247/first-reading>

⁶ <https://www.furfreealliance.com/fur-bans/>

⁷ <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022SDPR0019-000604>

⁸ <https://thefurbearers.com/blog/3-4-of-canadians-support-a-ban-on-fur-farming/>