



Fact Sheet:

Ban Fur Farms in Ontario

BACKGROUND

Fur farming is still an ongoing practice in Canada, with Ontario ranking as the second province in the nation for number of fur farms. Though a burgeoning industry in the previous two centuries, the fur trade has crashed in recent decades with the rise of synthetic options and increasing awareness of the detriments of fur production. Although it is a failing industry, there are still tens of thousands of animals in Ontario who are farmed for their fur each year. It is time for Ontario to follow in the footsteps of British Columbia, and numerous other regions and countries, and ban fur farming once and for all.

THE PROBLEM

Fur Farms Breed Disease

Fur-farmed animals are raised in cramped, stressful environments which weaken their immune systems and make them more susceptible to diseases that they can then spread to humans. The COVID-19 pandemic exhibited this risk in action, as mink farms became sites of rapid COVID-19 spread.

A Tripartite Global Early Warnings System (GLEWS) risk assessment found that fur farms housing animals in the families Mustelidae, Leporidae, and Canidae (minks, rabbits, and foxes, respectively) pose a serious risk to public health, in that these animals contract and spread COVID-19 (including new, vaccine-resistant mutations) to humans. Even when cautionary measures are in place, fur-farm-based outbreaks have been documented in ten countries, including Canada.

Fur-farmed animals are known to carry and transmit other zoonotic diseases as well, such as avian flu. Continued fur farming in Ontario could cause another severe COVID outbreak, or—even worse—a new zoonotic pandemic altogether.

Fur Farms Harm Our Environment

Contrary to fur producers' claims, farmed fur is much more detrimental to our environment than synthetic alternatives. Producing one real fur coat releases six times more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than producing one faux fur coat. The massive amount of manure produced on fur farms also produces runoff that pollutes and destroys our water sources, to the point that algae blooms are known to form.

Maintaining fur products also requires the use of harsh chemicals such as formaldehyde, which prevent biodegradation of fur products at the end of their lifetime. In our ongoing search for more sustainable materials, fur is not the right choice.

Fur Farms Sap Government Dollars

Fur is a dying industry. And as fur farms in Ontario bleed money, Ontario's government is forced to bail them out. Last year, a Freedom of Information request for documents from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs revealed that over \$15 million in Agristability funds have gone to fur farms in the last 10 years to subsidize their harsh declines in profits. Additionally, the North American Fur Auction (NAFA) based in Toronto entered into bankruptcy proceedings in 2019, reflecting the decline of the industry in Ontario and nationwide.

The fur farming industry is going downhill, and Ontario has other, more sustainable choices to put their funding into instead of an industry that is going to keep bleeding money.



Fur Farms Are Cruel

The most commonly fur-farmed animals in Ontario are minks and foxes. These are highly intelligent mammals, closely related to beloved pets such as ferrets and dogs. They are also wild animals, who are largely solitary and make large tracts of land their homes, their territories comprising several square kilometers on average.

On Canadian fur farms, minks and foxes are kept in cages of only a few meters or less. Their cages are devoid of any enrichment, and do not accommodate minks' natural urge to swim or foxes' natural urge to burrow and hide. They are forced to live in abysmal conditions—among piles of their own excrement, and among the rotting corpses of other animals.

Farmed minks and foxes commonly show signs of extreme psychological stress, such as pacing and self-mutilation. Their infections and injuries are left untreated. At the end of their lives, they are killed in manners that preserve the quality of their fur rather than manners that meet humane standards. Common methods include gas chambers, neck-breaking, and anal electrocution.

For foxes' and minks' closely-related domestic counterparts of dogs and ferrets, such treatment would constitute the most heinous of animal abuse. In the fur farming industry in Ontario, however, where regulations for fur factory farms are virtually nonexistent, these practices are just business as usual. And where Ontario's animal welfare legislation offers a carve-out for agricultural industry practices, it is also completely legal.

THE SOLUTION

The simple, universal solution for the problems above is a ban on fur farming in Ontario. A recent study found that 75% of Ontarians would support a ban on fur farms. Such a ban is feasible on the provincial level: British Columbia recently passed such a ban on mink farming, which phased out existing mink farms and prohibited opening future ones. These trends, combined with the inefficiency of current regulations, suggest that Ontario should consider new legislation banning fur farming altogether. This would be an easy solution to the ongoing public health, environmental, economic, and animal welfare issues raised by fur farms in Ontario. But most importantly, **a fur farming ban is what Ontarian voters want.**

