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WSPA's investigation into the global fur trade: Things we need to know

It is estimated that fur farms produce 85 per cent of fur in the world. Every year, an estimated 50 million animals are killed on fur farms alone. If rabbits are included, the number of animals killed every year solely for their fur may far exceed one billion.

Fox and mink have been bred in captivity for approximately only 90 years, which is less than three per cent of the 5000 years that humans have domesticated cattle, pigs, horses, and dogs. Consequently, it is not possible to ensure captive conditions and treatment that avoid mental suffering, especially given that most animals farmed for fur spend their entire lives in barren, battery style cages.

Mink and fox are the most common non-domesticated species killed, but other species include raccoon dogs, seals and chinchillas. Even domestic cats and dogs are farmed!

Which countries farm the most fur?

China is the biggest fur trade, production and processing base in the world. It is estimated that they produce as much as 80 per cent of global fur. It is also the largest exporter of fur clothing. In 2005, they sold approximately 95 per cent of their fur clothing to overseas markets.

Denmark is the world's largest European producer of mink fur, slaughtering an estimated 12 million mink every year. The Netherlands are the third largest producers of mink after China and Denmark, slaughtering five million mink every year.

The fifth largest mink producing country in the world is the USA. US farms kill approximately three million farm-raised animals every year. In addition, they hold approximately 660,000 breeding female mink on their fur farms.

While Europe is a major consumer of fur produced in China, the Norwegians actually export a significant proportion of their fur to China. This is because it is more sought after than their domestically-produced fur.

How far are we from a ban?

Fur farming is banned in the UK, Austria and Croatia. Other countries (for example, Switzerland) have legislation that effectively outlaws fur farming.

The EU, USA and Australia have each banned the trade in fur from dogs and cats. In addition, the USA, and, more recently, the EU, have banned the trade in fur from seals. Denmark has recently banned fox farming, but continues to be the world's second largest producer of mink fur.

To date though, no single country has imposed a complete ban on both fur production and fur trading. Despite the national victories around the world against fur farming, sadly, still not one country has taken the next logical step and imposed a complete ban on fur production and its trade. Until now, therefore no country has acknowledged that no animal should have to suffer in such an inherently cruel



Caged silver mink



Fox at a fur farm

© WSPA

industry for such trivial ends.

Not so cool Britannia?

For example, while England banned fur farming in 2000, London remained a world centre for fur buyers. In fact, the sale of fur has steadily increased since the fur production ban in 2000. Collectively, British Fur Trade Association (BFTA) members buy the majority of the world's fur at primary level (i.e. as pelts), and, in doing so, they receive a turnover of around £ 500 million a year.

Under the radar

The sad reality is that, as European countries' legislation (often based on the grounds of 'public morality') gradually renders fur farms economically unviable or prohibited, China's position as the global epicentre for fur production becomes further entrenched.

Find out more:

- > [Be fur free: a consumer guide](#)
- > [Farm life: miserable and fraught with intense suffering](#)
- > [How I can help](#)
- > [Does 'ethical' or 'green' fur exist?](#)

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