



The Fur Issue

2008



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Svoboda zvirat, 21 October 2008*

In my presentation you will hear staggering numbers and it is good to remind oneself of the individual animal and what it is going through from birth to becoming a pelt. I will fill you in with information that shows you how huge and financially influential the fur business is in 2008. I will also show you how China has become the biggest player in the field

More than 100 million animals worldwide, including raccoon dogs, foxes, mink, fitches and chinchillas are raised in wire mesh cages. The fur farms, (they should be called factory farms) subject animals to a lifetime of suffering and death. Animals spend their entire lives in these small, filthy wire mesh cages, madly pacing back and forth out of stress and boredom. There is no humane slaughter legislation to protect these animals. They are killed by cruel methods that preserve the pelt, such as gassing, neck breaking, clubbing and anal electrocution. I mixed in farms from different countries. You saw cages from Finland, Norway, Slovakia and China. I wanted to show you that the system is standardized. Farms look the same everywhere. Same cages, same dimensions. Foxes in cages as small as a suitcase. Cages with a floor of 0.6 m². I could even have mixed in some footage I filmed in 1984, you would only have spotted it because at that time I used 16 mm film. Granted, Finland added a second level inside the cage, a minute change. But the size stayed the same. It wouldn't change much anyhow, even if they enlarged the cages.

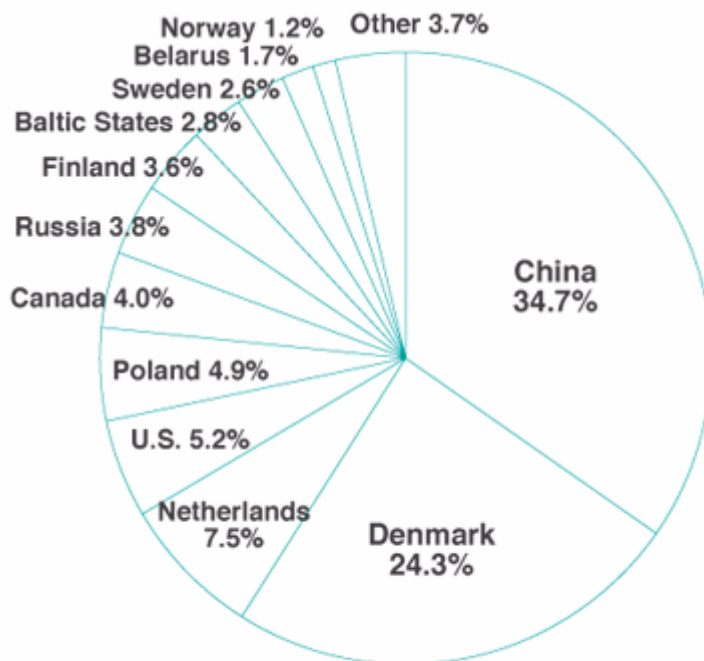
In 2004 and 2005 we did an investigation in China. The killing methods there are very crude to say the least. Unfortunately not much has changed yet. In the season 07/08 animals were still clubbed to death.

China's fur farms now produce 80% of the world's fur pelts. There are no animal welfare laws in China. Added to that, two million dogs and cats meet an agonizing and painful death to have their pelts turned into coats, fur trim and cheap trinkets.

There are no official figures regarding Chinese mink production, but unofficial estimates had placed it between 12.5 and 15 million in 2006. However, indications from dressing plants, vaccine producers, feed suppliers and other ancillary trades serving the farmers have caused observers to sharply upgrade their production estimates. Oslo Fur Auctions now credits China with a crop of about 20 million, far outpacing Denmark as the world's largest mink producer. The increases in production over the last year are staggering. Again China tops that curve with an increase of 65%.

Mink Fur total 55 Million

China	20,0 Million	65 % increase since 2006
Denmark	14.0 Million	4 % increase since 2006
Netherlands	3,4 Million	16 % increase since 2006
USA	3,0 Million	5 % increase since 2006
Poland	2.8 Million	27 % increase since 2006
Canada	2,3 Million	9 % increase since 2006
Russia	2,2 Million	5 % increase since 2006
Finland	2,1 Million	5 % increase since 2006
Baltic States	1,6 Million	14 % increase since 2006
Sweden	1,5 Million	7 % increase since 2006
Belarus	1.0 Million	15 % increase since 2006
Norway	680'000	28 % increase since 2006
Island	160'000	7 % increase since 2006



World Farmed Mink Production, 2007
Source: Oslo Fur Auctions

According to the latest statistics released annually by Oslo Fur Auctions, the worldwide harvest last season totaled 57.59 million pelts, China produced one third of the world output (of mink pelts).

Fox Fur total 7 Million

China	4,0 Million	up 14%
Finland	2,2 Million	up 2.3%
Norway	300'000	down 13%
Poland	150'000	
Russia	140'000	down 10%
Baltic States	100'000	
Canada	35'000	
USA	20.000	
Argentina	20'000	
Netherlands	10'000	

Fox pelts totaled 7 million. Again: China moved to the top with 4 million pelts, an increase of 14 % within one year.

Overall, there are 100 million animals abused for fur fashion. (55 mink, 7 foxes, 2 raccoon dogs, 21 breeding stock, 13 using traps, 2 cats and dogs).

China is not only the biggest producer, it is also the biggest processor of fur. At the 2008 Copenhagen Fur auction, of the 450 buyers, 280 were from China. Hong Kong is the world's largest importer of farmed fur skins and remains the leading exporter of fur garments.

This is depressing news, I know. Let me throw in some good news for a change. Some animal protection groups have had great success in ridding their nations of inhumane fur farms. The UK and Austria have banned fur factory farming. The Netherlands banned fox farming, New Zealand mink farming. Croatia will ban fur farming by 2017. Other nations have set strong animal welfare regulations that have made fur factory farming cost-prohibitive. Italy passed legislation requiring mink farms to provide the animals with more space, access to swimming water, and pens on the ground by 2010.

In Switzerland, the farming of animals for their fur is prevented by legislation, which only allows their keeping under what are effectively zoo conditions. The ordinance requires for two polar foxes or raccoon dogs a minimum of 40 m² natural grounds to dig, a place to hide and an 8 m² indoor area. Two red foxes need a minimum of 100 m² natural grounds, the possibility to hide plus a 10 m² indoor area. Two mink or fitches require a minimum of 15 m² natural grounds plus a water basin.

Well, lets return to what is happening at the fur front. It is important for us to know, what our counterpart is up to because it will influence our future tactics.

Fur-trimmed items currently are a half billion-dollar industry. Fur trim is a frivolous luxury responsible for the deaths of millions of animals each year. The number of animals killed for fur trim is expected to overtake the number of animals killed for full-fur garments. Because the trim trade doesn't place as much emphasis on pelt quality, color, and uniformity, the quality of care given to furbearers is diminished.

While China's industrial expansion in recent years has been tremendous, little attention has been paid to the effects on the environment, which, by many accounts, has been disastrous. It is only in the past year or so that the government has been taking measures aimed at forcing the polluters to start clean up their acts.

The chemicals commonly used to process fur include acids, hydrogen peroxide, chromates, formaldehyde, bleaching agents, and various types of dyes. Many of these are potential skin irritants. Formaldehyde is classified as a human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, and a probable human carcinogen by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Chromates, depending on the type of compounds, can cause breathing problems and other health issues.



The „Origin Assured“ label (OA) is a marketing tool launched to assure consumers that fur garments labeled OA come from countries where fur farming is regulated. The industry tries to disassociate themselves differentiating from Chinese fur, from the Chinese killing methods that we made public three years ago. They are stressing that EU fur equals to welfare and environmentally friendly fur. It is a very effective marketing message and it has in my opinion real potential for fudging, blurring the issue.

All right. So we have an indication on what our opponents are scheming. Now let me tell you what some of the organizations on our side have been doing. There are several highly successful campaigns going on.



It is quite difficult to raise awareness for animal welfare in China. Swiss Animal Protection has coordinated and financed a regional poster contest in China, the Design Against Fur competition. With astounding results. In 2007 over 4000 art students turned in poster against fur and this year we got over 5000 entries. All these students - of course - had to research the topic beforehand. My Chinese friends even organized a big exhibition of the winning posters at art museums in Wuhan and Shanghai. And – we have already rented space for a big exhibition in Beijing early next year. Slowly, slowly we are finding a way to raise the awareness in China about the cruelty involved with the fur business. It takes patience, but there is hope.

List of nations or states that have taken legislative action to restrict or ban fur factory farms

Austria: Passed an outright ban on fur farming in 2004.

Croatia: In December 2006, the Croatian government introduced a new Animal Protection Act that will ban fur farming. The legislation came into force on January 1, 2007 and the ban will be subject to a 10 year phase out period.

Denmark: Legislation to improve the welfare of fur bearing animals was adopted on January 15, 2007. The legislation included a number of welfare improvements for foxes on fur farms, such as requiring larger cages, nesting boxes, and the ability for the foxes to dig. These improvements are predicted to cause the practice of fox farming to become economically unviable. Welfare regulations for mink farms remain weak.

Italy: As of 2008, all mink farms in Italy must allow swimming water, more space, and pens on the ground. This will likely lead to the closure of all Italian mink farms.

The Netherlands banned fox farming in 1995, with a phase out period of 10 years. Chinchilla farming was prohibited in 1997.

New Zealand allows fur farming of ferrets but prohibits the import of mink. This effectively bans mink farming in New Zealand.

Sweden: In 1995, Sweden passed an Ordinance that banned the keeping of foxes in cages and required that foxes be kept in such a way that they can be active, dig, and socialize with other foxes. Fox farming is no longer economically viable in Sweden

Switzerland: The farming of fur animals is prevented by legislation which only allows their keeping under what are effectively zoo conditions.

United Kingdom: Under the Fur Farming (Prohibition) Act of 2000, England and Wales banned fur farming completely. Northern Ireland and Scotland both banned fur farming shortly afterwards. There are now no fur farms anywhere in the U.K.

USA: Some states prohibit keeping foxes in captivity because of concerns about disease transmission to native wildlife. California has housing requirements for mink and fox that make the costs of fur farming prohibitive.