



FUR FARMING, LAST PLEA TO PARLIAMENT FOR THE #SALVAVISONI OPERATION: LAV AND ESSERE ANIMALI PLEA, EACH DAY OF DELAY CONDEMNS 550 MINKS, 200 THOUSAND A YEAR. A SCIENTIFIC DOSSIER OF EVIDENCE ON INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN MINK FARMING CONDITIONS AND RESPECT FOR ANIMAL WELFARE VIDEO-COMPLAINT OF ESSERE ANIMALI: <http://bit.ly/vita-visoni-1-minuto>

Parliament should speak out on the #SALVAVISONI operation: each day of delay means the death of 550 minks (almost 200,000 a year). This is the call by LAV (<http://www.lav.it/en>) and Essere Animali (www.essereanimali.org) to the Senators of the Health Commission and the Honorable MPs of the Agricultural Commission. In fact, this is the last period for the MPs to align with 90% of Italians who have, more than once, expressed themselves in favour of a **national ban on fur farming**.

Each year, mink farming starts between late April and early May with the female minks giving birth to the kits, and ends between December and January with the killing of the minks in gas chambers: an unethical and cruel practice that the Italian Parliament must put an end to, by commencing the legislative process of the #SALVAVISONI operation.

In this period, as the new mink kits are born, Italy also begins a new fur farming cycle.

Thus, with the #SALVAVISONI (#SAVETHEMINKS) hashtag, a new national mobilization of the LAV (<http://www.lav.it/en>) and Essere Animali (www.essereanimali.org) animal rights associations, **united in a common front to ask Parliament to approve the #SALVAVISONI operation**, i.e. the draft law (there are three Draft Laws on this issue, between the lower-house and the Senate, that have been standing for years) **that, if approved will lead to the closure of the last 20 mink farms still in operation in Italy**.

Along with the **new video-complaint** (<http://bit.ly/vita-visoni-1-minuto>) by Essere Animali that documents the appalling conditions in which these animals live (wild, semi-aquatic animals, predators, that for these reasons cannot live in a cage), today LAV publishes a **new dossier supported** by in-depth scientific research that demolishes all arguments put forward by the fur industry (including the [WelFur](#) project) used to support a form of breeding that has no reason to exist.

“WelFur” is a project conceived and funded by the fur industry whereby mink farmers (but also fox farmers) assert they can guarantee animals a high level of welfare. However, numerous studies have already discredited the “WelFur” protocols, proving that this certification system cannot offer animals the environmental and structural conditions required to respect their ethology.

➤ **Some of the main objections to the WelFur protocols**

The file called **“Il caso contro l'allevamento degli animali “da pelliccia”** (original title "The Case Against Fur Factory Farming", Nov. 2015, Heather Pickett and Stephen Harris BSc PhD DSc for Respect For Animals), is a scientific analysis of the legal standards for animal welfare and WelFur: it contains an in-depth examination of the living conditions of minks (and foxes) farmed for the fur industry by reference to the scientific factors that affect animal welfare.

The analysis shows that fur farming and fur production are at odds with current EU legal regulations governing Protection of animals kept for farming purposes ([Direttiva 98/58/CE](#), point 21 of the Annex: *“No animal shall be kept for farming purposes unless it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of its genotype or phenotype, that it can be kept without detrimental effect to its health or welfare”*, and unless the farms meet the minimum standards set by the Council of the European Union (more specifically the [Raccomandazione](#) – recommendation- of 22/06/1999).

- **The issue of mortality**

The WelFur protocols do not include early death (before eight weeks for foxes and 15 May for minks). The females give birth to their kits at the end of April, so why are deaths only being counted from 15 May in terms of quantifying mortality at fur farms?

The WelFur project, ignoring the real number of deaths among the mink newborns (and likewise the killing of fox cubs), has a misleading welfare assessment system that is not suitable for guaranteeing real animal welfare.

- **The issue of cages**

The WelFur protocols do not encourage, by increasing appraisal ratings, potential increases in the space made available to the animals.

The recommendation of the Council of the European Union stipulates a minimum of 2550cm² for minks; the WelFur protocols give the highest possible ratings when this is respected, whereas providing a area of 1000 cm² (i.e. less than 40% of the minimum space required) gives an intermediate score.

The WelFur project does not promote structural improvements and the assessment system is misleading and not geared towards improving the level of welfare of caged-animals.

- **The issue of injuries**

The WelFur project fails to take into account the degree of physical and mental suffering of the animals. Also with regard to this parameter it has a misleading assessment system (e.g. how can a severe amputation of the animal or self-mutilation be disregarded?) And it is not suitable for guaranteeing real animal welfare.

- **The issue of stereotypes (anomalous-compulsive behaviour)**

As for detecting stereotypical behaviour, the WelFur parameters are aimed at minimizing the detection of these severe and very real situations of abject levels of animal welfare.

- **The issue of animal killing**

The mink protocol does not penalise the use of killing methods considered unacceptable for welfare reasons (e.g. killing in gas chambers using carbon dioxide or monoxide).

- **Non domestic animals**

The most important aspect of domestication, in terms of animal welfare, is the unique ability of certain animals to interact with human beings in a positive way. In these farms, animals are selected with the sole objective of improving the quality and colour of their fur, body and litter size. In these farms, animals have never adapted to close contact with man and cannot, in any way, be considered as domesticated.

“Fear of man in non domesticated animals (and documented in fur farms) is a factor that shows the impossibility of breeding these animals”.

- **Animal welfare problems**

Being kept from expressing natural behaviours – such as hunting, foraging, running, swimming, climbing – and fear of humans has led to many stress-related symptoms as well as more serious health issues among fur farmed animals. Numerous inspections and studies have reported evidence of:

“...fear, stereotypical behaviour, gnawing of the cage wire, biting of their own skin and tails, self-mutilation or loss of limb as a result of fighting, physical deformities (bent feet), reproductive problems and infant mortality.”

Some scientific studies advise against the current killing methods used in certain farm, such as CO₂ or CO suffocation and anal electrocution. Moreover, there is no official training or certification required for the

fur farm workers involved in the killing of the animals.

The Europeans are against fur farming.

Most of the European citizens that were interviewed in 10 different countries, the main fur-producing countries included, are against fur farming. Some European countries have already issued bans and a major debate has emerged even at European institutional level.

In Italy the Euripedes survey has shown they were 83% in 2011; 85,5% in 2014; 90,7% in 2015; and 86,3% in 2016.

Explicit and definitive bans have already been issued in Austria, Slovenia, the United-Kingdom, Croatia (as of 2017), Bosnia and Herzegovina (as of 2018), and in certain regions of Belgium and Germany. Fox farming has been banned in Denmark (as of 2024), whereas in 2012, Holland, one of the main fur producing countries with its 5.500.000 minks farmed each year, had already agreed to issue a ban on fur farming for all species taking effect in 2024.

Professor Stephen Harris from Bristol University, co-drafter of the report, has declared that : ***“ the foxes and minks farmed for their fur are wild animals; they are not domesticated and thus it is impossible to satisfy most of their basic needs or ensure their welfare in these fur farms.”***

According to the WelFur protocols, the current mink-farming system is the *“best current practice”* (the animals are kept in metal-wired cages where they cannot swim, clumped in by the thousands in one single enclosure).

And yet, it has been demonstrated that **these living conditions do not satisfy all of the “Five Freedoms”** (freedom from hunger and thirst, from discomfort, from pain, injury or disease, to express normal behaviour and from fear and distress), **a scientific parameter internationally used in order to evaluate whether an animal’s life “ is a life worth living”**.

“Banning fur farming is the only legitimate instrument we have in order to address the serious animal welfare problems in the fur industry: we demand that our Parliament follows through with the #SALVAISONI (#savetheminks!) operation”, declares LAV and Essere Animali.

On the basis of these scientific arguments, combined with the ethical, social, environmental, political and economic issues at stake, LAV and Essere Animali renew their plea to Parliament (particularly to the lower house’s Agricultural Commission and the Senate’s Health Commission) to urgently approve and vote the draft law for a ban on fur farming.

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