

Rt. Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

cc: George Eustice MP, Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

EFRA Committee members: Neil Parish MP (Chair), Alan Brown MP, Paul Flynn MP, John Grogan MP, Dr Caroline Johnson MP, Kerry McCarthy MP, Sandy Martin MP, Sheryll Murray MP, David Simpson MP, Angela Smith MP, Julian Sturdy MP.

Petitions Committee members: Helen Jones MP (Chair), Martyn Day MP, Michelle Donelan MP, Steve Double MP, Luke Hall MP, Mike Hill MP, Catherine McKinnell MP, Damien Moore MP, Paul Scully MP, Liz Twist MP, Daniel Zeichner MP.

25th May 2018

Dear Secretary of State

### **Fur farming and animal welfare concerns**

As veterinary surgeons and animal behaviourists we want to express our concern at the severe animal welfare deficiencies inherent to the fur trade. Both public opinion and scientific studies acknowledge that each mammal is a sentient individual. Every dog, cat, horse, fox or any other mammal has an inner emotional life. We understand this through our interactions with both wild and domesticated animals.

More than 100 million animals, including foxes, chinchillas, minks, raccoon dogs and rabbits, are killed for their skin and fur every year, the majority (around 85%) are raised intensively in battery-cage farm systems that fail to satisfy some of their most basic needs, particularly their need to display normal behaviours essential for mental and physical well-being.

Investigations on fur farms worldwide reveal worrying, even distressing evidence of persistently poor welfare conditions. Wild species such as fox and mink retain their basic wild needs regardless of being bred and kept in captivity. It is inaccurate, for example, to refer to an arctic fox bred on a fur farm as a 'domesticated' animal that has different environmental and behavioural needs to its wild relatives.

Wild animals on fur farms live their lives in wire-floored cages thousands of times smaller than their natural territories. They are denied their biological inheritance to exhibit natural behaviours and stimulations such as hunting, digging and swimming. And they can be kept in what is for them unnatural social groups. For example naturally solitary mink are compelled to live in very close proximity to each other. These features of fur farms can inevitably lead to psychological stresses.

Instances of stereotypical behaviour, a sign of compromised psychological well-being, have been well documented on fur farms, as has cannibalism, untreated wounds, foot deformities and eye infections.

We note that over the years the fur industry has developed and promoted various welfare certification schemes. Most schemes require no more than what is locally, legally required. Almost 20 years ago, a Council of Europe Recommendation recognised the inherent welfare problems of battery cage fur farm systems, and urged that housing systems should be developed that allow animals to fulfil their biological needs, for example mink to access water for swimming, and foxes to be able to climb and dig as well as fulfil other 'exploratory, territorial and social behaviour'. None of these natural behaviours are possible to any meaningful extent on typical fur farms, and such a barren and unnaturally limited environment can never be conducive to basic wellbeing. The presence of a single bone or section of plastic tube in an otherwise empty cage does not constitute sufficient or meaningful environmental enrichment.

There is a strong understanding of this in the United Kingdom, which is why it is now over 15 years since we banned fur farming in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, on the grounds that farming and killing animals specifically for their skin and fur is unethical. Evidence today from investigations of fur farms in many European countries and elsewhere including China shows that these welfare concerns outside the United Kingdom remain unresolved. In fact, conditions in overseas fur farms are so inhumane that Humane Society International UK is calling for a ban on fur imports, arguing that their purchase makes us party to the cruelty.

Yours sincerely

1. Marc Abraham BVM&S MRCVS
2. Veronica Aksmanovic MA VMD BSc MRCVS, London Vet Clinic
3. Professor Michael C. Appleby OBE, University of Edinburgh
4. Dr Sandra Baker, BSc (Hons) DPhil, Research Fellow, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford.
5. Dr Ruth Barber BVSc Cert GP(SAP) MRCVS
6. Professor Marc Beckoff, Professor Emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Colorado.
7. Dr Helen Bolter BVSc MRCVS
8. Ciara Clarke BSc Hons BVSc MRCVS, London Vet Clinic
9. Claire Coupaud Mellado BVSc MRCVS
10. Dr Richard Cowie, Professor of Animal Behaviour, Cardiff University
11. Rory Cowlam BVetMed MRCVS
12. Dr. Alessandro Cozzi, DVM, MSc, PhD, Dipl ECAWBM-AWSEL, Diplomate of the European College of Animal Welfare and Behavioural Medicine – Animal Welfare Science Ethic and Law – ECAWBM-AWSEL.
13. Nichola Crippen BSc (hons) BVSc MRCVS
14. Sarah Cripps BVetMed MRCVS FHEA Assistant Professor in Clinical and Professional Skills, School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, University of Nottingham

15. Prof. Dr. Gonçalo Da Graça Pereira, DVM, MsC, PhD, Dip ECAWBM (BM), Dip ECAWBM (AWSEL), European Veterinary Specialist in Behavioural Medicine (Companion Animals)
16. Crina Dragu, MRCVS, Tierärztin, Village Vet Practice
17. Professor Cathy Dwyer, BSc, PhD, Professor of Animal Behaviour and Welfare, SRUC and Director of the Jeanne Marchig International Centre for Animal Welfare Education, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, University of Edinburgh.
18. Joanna Evans BVSc MRCVS
19. Bruce Fogle MBE DVM MRCVS
20. Luke Gamble MRCVS, World Veterinary Service CEO
21. Dr Pete Goddard B.Vet.Med. PhD DipECSRHM, DipECAWBM, MRCVS
22. Dr Jane Goodall PhD, DBE, Founder - the Jane Goodall Institute & UN Messenger of Peace
23. James Greenwood, BVSc MRCVS
24. Cat Henstridge BVSc MRCVS
25. Dr Sonya P. Hill, Lecturer and Programme Leader in Animal Behaviour and Welfare, University of Chester
26. Dr Jo Hockenhull BSc (hons) MSc PhD member of the Animal Welfare and Behaviour research group, Bristol Veterinary School, University of Bristol.
27. Joe Inglis BVSc MRCVS
28. Joanna Jerjis BSc (Hons) BVetMed (Hons) MRCVS
29. Dr Mark Jones BVSc MSc (Stir) MSc (UL) MRCVS, Born Free Foundation veterinarian
30. Dr Rhys Jones BSc (Hons) MPhil PhD FLS FRSB CEnv MCIEEM, School of Biological Sciences, Cardiff University
31. Professor Andrew Knight MANZCVS, DipECAWBM (AWSEL), DipACAW, PhD, FRCVS, SFHEA, Professor of Animal Welfare & Ethics, University of Winchester
32. Samantha Lane BVSc BSAVAPGCertSAS MRCVS, Advanced Practitioner in Small Animal Surgery
33. Professor Alastair MacMillan BVSc, MSc, PhD, FRCPath, MRCVS, visiting Professor, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Surrey, and former DEFRA vet
34. Dr Steven McCulloch BVSc BA PhD DipECAWBM(AWSEL) MRCVS, Acting Director, Centre for Animal Welfare, Winchester University
35. Dr. Alan McElligott, Associate Professor in Animal Behaviour, University of Roehampton
36. Dr Dorothy McKeegan, BVA Animal Welfare Foundation Senior Lecturer; College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences; University of Glasgow
37. Dr Scott Miller, BVSc MRCVS LVI
38. Emma Milne BVSc MRCVS
39. Dr Elizabeth Mullineaux MRCVS, RCVS Specialist in Wildlife Medicine (Mammalian)

40. Professor Elena Nalon DVM, PhD European Veterinary Specialist in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law
41. Dr. Christine Nicol, MA DPhil, Professor of Animal Welfare, Royal Veterinary College, University of London
42. Tamsin O'Brien BVSc MRCVS, Freedom Vet Rehab Clinic
43. Chris Packham, TV broadcaster and wildlife expert
44. Grant Petrie MA VetMB CertSAC CertSAM MRCVS
45. Dr Judy Puddifoot BVet Med, MRCVS, MSc, BSc
46. Lucy Roots BSc BVSc MRCVS PGcert Vet Ed
47. Alick Simmons BVMS, MSc, DipAABAW, MRCVS, former UK Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer
48. Dr Mark Stidworthy MA VetMB PhD FRCPath MRCVS RCVS Recognised Specialist in Veterinary Pathology (Zoo and Wildlife)
49. Julian Street BVSc MRCVS veterinary surgeon
50. Helen Grace Ward BAHons DVM MRCVS