

# THE FUR TRUTH

HOW A UK FUR BAN WOULD  
DAMAGE AND SET BACK  
ANIMAL WELFARE

*The consequences of a UK fur ban and the  
top 10 fur sector myths exposed*

**BRITISH FUR TRADE**  
fur - the natural responsible choice britishfur.co.uk

Introduction:

# STANDARDS, ANIMAL WELFARE, SUSTAINABILITY

*The global fur sector operates—rightly—in one of the most stringent regulatory environments, adhering to concurrent international, national, and local regulation, including around animal welfare and environmental standards. The fur sector, including those that operate in the UK, takes seriously its international, national, and local obligations and works with governments and intergovernmental bodies to develop, implement, and advance these standards.*

The sector plays a major role in driving up standards around biosecurity, animal welfare, and environmental protection and has designed and implemented major global schemes and programmes to deliver safeguards and standards. The fur sector also plays an active role on many national and international governmental bodies that exist to protect and enhance the conservation of animals; this includes the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS).

Standards are based on independent scientific and veterinary advice with regular third-party inspection reinforced by local, regional, and international regulations and enforcement. In addition, the fur sector is launching a global certification and traceability system, Furmark® will allow consumers to trace the origin of furs, through the supply chain, to the relevant animal welfare programme, providing complete reassurance.

The sector has also announced a move to the production of Furmark® only fur over the next few years. We now believe that the time is right to set an ambitious target and timeframe for the organised global fur trade to adopt this approach and scheme. This is a major undertaking involving multiple species and every country and across a complex global supply chain, but we feel the time is right to set this challenging target.

We believe that consumers want to see full assurances on the natural sustainable fur that they buy and so the global fur sector will respond accordingly and help deliver this goal with the development and roll out of Furmark®.

FURMARK IS A GLOBAL CERTIFICATION SYSTEM GUARANTEEING WELFARE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS.



FURMARK  
SUSTAINABLE NATURAL FUR



**THE SECTOR  
PLAYS A MAJOR  
ROLE IN DRIVING  
UP STANDARDS  
AROUND  
BIOSECURITY,  
ANIMAL  
WELFARE, AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION**

# CONSEQUENCES OF A FUR BAN IN THE UK

*Sales of natural fur in the UK have increased in recent years and are popular among younger age groups, as environmentally conscious consumers increasingly reject the mass-produced non-renewables epitomised by the fast fashion crisis and search out long lasting, sustainable natural materials.*

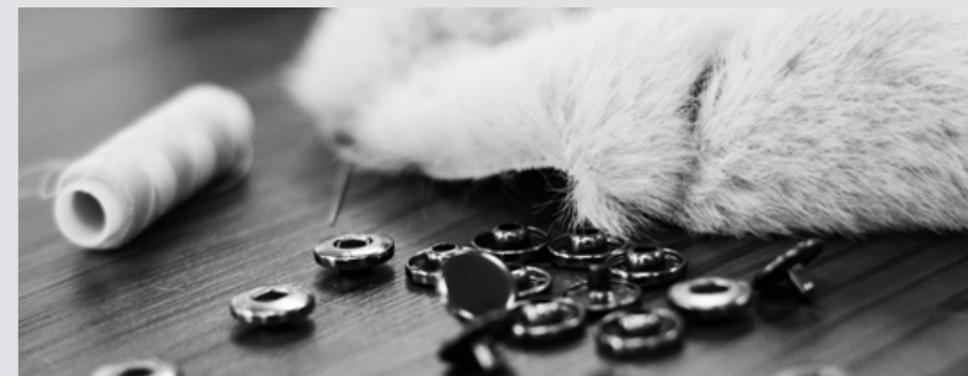
Yet, animal rights groups are now actively and vocally lobbying the British Government for fur sales to be banned in the UK using selective data, arguments and anecdotal evidence.

This document sets out the consequences of a UK fur ban and corrects the most common myths that are being used by animal rights groups about the fur sector to advance their claims. Such shrill voices, of course, do not represent the 'silent majority' who do not support such a ban; opinions that should not be 'cancelled' but recognised and respected. Those that shout the loudest seldom have the support of the majority or their moral backing.

Although they would never admit it, such groups would achieve their aims far better by working with the organised fur sector to drive up standards as cooperative models in other sectors have shown.

*This document also suggests measures that the Government could take to help further protect consumers who choose to buy and wear fur and how it could drive up standards globally.*

*One thing is clear though, banning fur in the UK would damage and set back the cause of animal welfare.*



## 1. A UK FUR BAN WOULD DO NOTHING TO IMPROVE ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS

Following its departure from the EU, the UK will take its place as an independent member of international bodies that regulate the trade in wildlife and animal welfare including CITES. This is a powerful position that should be used to drive up standards globally working in cooperation with other countries. Simply banning fur in the UK would not end the international fur sector or trade in fur-bearing animals. Far from it. It would though diminish the UK's position in the eyes of many countries for whom fur is a major commodity and export. The UK's voice to influence and drive up and improve animal welfare standards globally would be reduced.



## 2. A UK FUR BAN WOULD INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF FUR COMING FROM UNREGULATED SOURCES DAMAGING ANIMAL WELFARE

Banning fur in the UK does not, of course, mean that demand would stop. Supply would switch from legal furs that come from reputable, responsible and certified sources overseen by law enforcement, replaced by those that do not respect sector or governmental standards including on animal welfare. This has happened with other commodities that have either been banned or where taxation or import duties have been significantly increased. The aim of those calling for a ban on fur in the UK on the grounds of animal welfare would, therefore, be fundamentally undermined.



## 3. A UK FUR BAN WOULD BE UNENFORCEABLE

The reality of a UK fur ban is that it would punish consumers, legitimate retailers, and those that deal in legal, high-quality sustainable and certified furs whilst putting huge strain on law enforcement. Banning fur in the UK would be unenforceable leaving HMRC and Border Force trying to monitor and police thousands of parcels and shipments as they are imported into the UK every week. Much of the trade would simply move to unregulated, untaxed online sources including those operated by criminal elements. Indeed, this was recently highlighted in July 2020 when a Federal Court in San Francisco recognised that the fur ban in the city could not apply to online sales with the Court stating that "Retailers who want to sell fur to San Francisco residents may do so online."



#### 4. A UK FUR BAN WOULD OPEN THE UK TO LEGAL CHALLENGE FROM FUR NATIONS

In the event of a unilateral UK ban, it is highly likely that major fur-producing and fur-manufacturing countries would seek to challenge the legal veracity of a UK ban in the international courts and at the World Trade Association. In many countries across the globe, fur production and manufacturing play a significant role in their economies while London, as a major fashion centre, would also suffer. In Europe, such countries include Denmark, Finland, Greece, Spain, Italy, Poland, and France, whilst in North America, Canada and the USA are both major exporters of fur to the UK. Fur that comes from such countries is highly regulated therefore it would be difficult to justify a UK ban on the grounds of animal welfare concerns. These countries would not wish to see the UK market close because of pressure from a small group of animal rights campaigners.



A UK fur ban also sends out the wrong message at a time when the UK is looking to conclude free trade deals with many of these countries; it would unilaterally cut off a key export and jeopardise such deals. It would also highlight that the UK can be 'captured' by narrow campaign groups that disrupt international negotiations for their own special interests signalling that the UK is not led by the evidence and cannot be trusted as a 'rational international player'.



#### 5. A UK FUR BAN WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT INDIGENOUS, RELIGIOUS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

In many parts of the world such as Canada, USA, Greenland and Russia, entire rural and indigenous communities rely on the fur trade for their economic viability and existence. Trapping also has a big cultural and heritage significance and is essential for many areas to retain their identity, heritage and traditions. Fur also has special significance to many communities that wear specific items made from fur including, for example, the Shtreimel, the fur hat worn by members of the Jewish community. A fur ban would impact directly on these groups disregarding the importance that they place on fur.



#### 6. A UK FUR BAN WOULD LEAD TO JOB LOSSES AND IMPACT THE UK ECONOMY

The fur sector in the UK provides jobs, both direct and indirect, to thousands of people and sustains hundreds of businesses. Many of these jobs are highly skilled and specialised in SMEs across the supply chain such as retail, fashion design, manufacturing and logistics. The UK fur sector is an important source of revenue contributing valuable income to HM Treasury.

The British Fashion Council estimates that 240,000 or a quarter of all jobs in the UK Fashion industry will be lost due to impact of COVID 19/ Therefore, it would appear illogical for the Government to add to this economic hardship with a ban on fur given everything that it is trying to do to support the economy at this time.



#### 7. BAN FUR AND ANIMAL RIGHTS GROUPS WOULD SIMPLY CALL FOR OTHER BANS

Animal rights groups have a clear agenda: to end the use of all animals or animal-derived materials whether for human consumption, for clothing or other use. Ban fur and such groups would simply move onto the next item on their list including silk, leather, and wool. The same groups are advocating bans on modern farming practices that provides food security to British households; they've even advocated banning the humble fish n' chips. Yet, such narrow views do not represent the mainstream of public opinion that overwhelmingly supports the continued use and consumption of natural products and materials including those from animals. There is no 'moral outrage' on the continued sale of fur garments in the UK as evidenced by increased fur sales in recent years with support particularly among younger age groups who reject non-renewable fast fashions.



# TOP 10 COMMON MYTHS AROUND FUR

1.



## THE FUR SECTOR IS UNREGULATED

The fur sector is tightly regulated by state, national, and international laws and regulations in addition to industry codes of practice and programmes that are subjected to extensive third-party inspection and certification. These regulations cover everything from animal welfare to environmental impact including cage sizes, types of traps to the feed and disposal of waste materials. For example, the farm-based programme that covers Europe, Welfur, is recognised as an example of best practice by the European Commission, which means the system has been scrutinized for its validity and credibility, and qualifies for legal implementation. Welfur is based on scientific methodology and is developed by independent researchers from seven European universities in accordance with the principles of the European

Commission's Welfare Quality programme. The fur sector also continues to engage with Governments and bodies such as CITES, IUCN, AIHTS to drive up animal welfare standards.

WELFUR, THE EUROPEAN FARM RAISED WELFARE THAT SUPPLIES THE VAST MAJORITY OF UK FURS, IS RECOGNISED AS AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION.



2.



## ANIMALS ARE MISTREATED ON FUR FARMS

As any pet owner knows, the condition of an animal's coat is one of the first and clearest indications of the care that the animal is receiving. A fur farmer's livelihood depends upon ensuring that his or her animals receive the best possible feeding, sanitary housing and care that the animals' eventual dispatch is humane, quick and painless. Millions of pounds have been invested in objective scientific research and programmes to ensure the optimum animal welfare standards for animals covering everything from housing to feed are guaranteed. The modern, organised fur sector bears little resemblance to the caricature painted by animal rights activists.

3.



## FUR PRODUCTION IS BAD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Independent studies have found that fur has many environmental benefits and credentials. Real fur is a natural, renewable, and sustainable resource compared to the products of the non-renewable mass-produced fast fashion industry. Farmed mink are, for example, fed with leftovers from abattoirs, fishing by catch, and other food production by-products - they "recycle" wastes that would otherwise go to landfills. Biofuels made from farmed mink are a second-generation biofuel and used for heating purposes and in the production of cement.

Whilst the fur sector has developed the 'Safefur' standard for certified dressers and dyers meaning that those working with Furmark® fur are committed to using chemicals from an agreed list, satisfying laboratory verification requirements and government oversight on factories environmental footprint.

4.



## ANIMALS ARE CAUGHT IN UNREGULATED TRAPS

The majority of animals trapped are not for fur but for pest or environmental control. As part of the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS) that is recognised and endorsed by all fur producing countries, all traps used for any reason must reach a humane standard which, depending on the species, requires the animal to be killed outright and quickly. Trap lines must be visited within a day of being set. Trappers must also conform to local, regional and provincial laws and regulations and will need a licence to operate in their locality that is subject to on the spot, unannounced inspection by law enforcement. The UK implemented AIHTS into UK law in 2019 and will become a stand-alone party following the end of EU transition period.

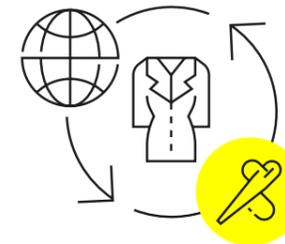
5.



## THE FUR SECTOR TRADES IN ENDANGERED SPECIES

Wild fur species are abundant and need to be managed through conservation programmes. In fact, trapping for fur is part of many wildlife management programmes in the countries that produce wild fur because fur species tend to be abundant predators which need to be controlled for the health of an ecosystem. The fur sector is actively adhering to the sustainable use conservation principle and is not seen as an issue by conservationists. In fact, the International Fur Federation has been a voting member of the IUCN (the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) since 1985 and sponsors IUCN Conservation projects. Furthermore, the fur sector and its members have encouraged and supported CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) Since its Inception in the 1970's.

REAL FUR IS A NATURAL, RENEWABLE, AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE COMPARED TO THE PRODUCTS OF THE NON-RENEWABLE MASS-PRODUCED FAST FASHION INDUSTRY.





# TOP 10 COMMON MYTHS AROUND FUR *(continued)*

6.



## ANIMALS ARE SKINNED ALIVE

You may have seen a video taken in China and released in 2005, but here are the facts: filmed confessions and signed affidavits from those involved have now proven that, in fact, the events were intentionally staged by professional activists who paid Chinese villagers to perform these cruel acts in order to make an anti-fur propaganda piece.

Such cruelty is of course illegal in all fur producing countries, and moreover, the fur sector actively encourages all governments to enforce anti-cruelty laws. Not only would skinning an animal alive be unimaginable sadistic and unethical, it would also be unnecessarily difficult, impractical, dangerous and result in a poor-quality pelt. In fact, the animal must have been dead for several hours before the pelting process can begin. Anyone who attempts to carry out such a vile procedure should be dealt with by the law.

7.



## THERE IS A MAJORITY IN FAVOUR OF A FUR BAN IN THE UK

The results often proclaimed and shouted about by animal rights groups apparently showing a majority in favour of a fur ban in the UK are of course the results of questions asked by those very same groups and are leading, for example, failing to describe the true nature of the fur sector. Research shows that there is no outright majority in favour of a ban on responsibly sourced fur in the UK. The overwhelming majority of people in the UK support the use and consumption of animals from sustainable and responsibly sources.

The claims by animal rights groups that there is a moral outrage about the sale of real fur in the UK is nothing but a fabricated line with no evidence to back up such a statement. Indeed, as described below fur sales have increased in recent years; this wouldn't be happening if there was a moral outrage.

8.



## FAKE FUR IS BETTER FOR ENVIRONMENT THAN THE REAL THING

Fake or plastic fur, to give it its more accurate name, is far worse for the environment than the real thing. Fake furs are made from petroleum-based products derived from non-renewable resources and take 1000 years to break down, whilst natural fur comes from renewable resources with a 30-year life span that will start to breakdown after 30 days. Consumers are rightly rejecting the fast fashion crisis and synthetic materials are moving increasingly to sustainable materials including natural fur and is one of the reasons why sales have increased in recent years.

9.



## FUR IS UNNECESSARY LUXURY THAT ONLY THE PRIVILEGED CAN AFFORD

Walk down any street and you will see people wearing fur of all ages and demographics. Fur is popular and that's why fur sales have increased by over 200 percent in recent years in the UK. Indeed, between 2010 and 2018, the UK saw the biggest growth in fur imports among the twenty largest importing countries in the world. Natural fur is available in 'normal' high street shops. Such shops, in selling certified responsibly sourced furs, are simply meeting a demand that is looking for long-lasting, sustainable and quality product. Fur is, therefore, an everyday natural material recognised for its sustainable high endurance.

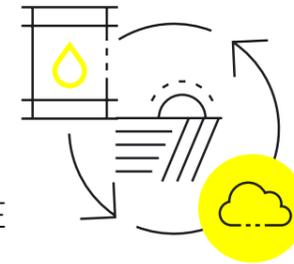
10.



## DOGS AND CATS ARE USED BY THE FUR SECTOR

There are laws, including in the UK, banning the use of domestic cats and dog species for fur across the globe and the members of organised fur sector have had a voluntary worldwide ban that pre-dates these laws. Fur from domestic cat or dog is not suitable to be used in fur coats. The fur trade actively supports all governments to legislate against any mislabelling of fur products and enforce that legislation.

FAKE FURS ARE MADE FROM PETROLEUM-BASED PRODUCTS DERIVED FROM NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES AND TAKE 1000 YEARS TO BREAK DOWN.



**FUR IS POPULAR, PARTICULARLY AMONG YOUNGER AGE GROUPS, WITH FUR SALES INCREASING BY OVER 200 PERCENT IN RECENT YEARS IN THE UK**



# WHAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD BE DOING

*Instead of being pressurised by the minority voices of animal rights groups calling for bans on the use of a natural, sustainable material that benefits the UK economy and meets a legitimate demand from the consumer, we feel the Government should commit to a five-point plan that would drive up animal welfare standards globally, tackle the fast fashion crisis and actively encourage the use of natural, sustainable textiles.*

Below we set out viable policies – including tax incentives, improved regulations, and new transparency measures – that, if enacted, would bring an immediate boost to businesses already creating, repairing, and remodelling natural, sustainable products and would incentivise others to adopt these biodegradable materials.

**They would also increase consumer confidence at a retail level with an improved, enhanced labelling scheme so that consumers can see exactly what they are buying and understand the environmental impact of their purchases.**

Ironically, they would also do what those calling for a ban on fur in the UK say that they want, improve standards in animal welfare.



THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD COMMIT TO A FIVE-POINT PLAN THAT WOULD DRIVE UP ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS GLOBALLY.

## THE FIVE-POINT PLAN:



**Incentivise garment reuse, repair, and remodelling** by removing VAT from those services



**Spur the slow fashion revolution** by halving VAT on garments made of more than 90% natural, sustainable textiles



**Create a better post-Brexit labelling** scheme that includes environmental impact and durability information



**Introduce transparency obligations** on businesses to educate the public on microfibre pollution, environmental impact, product end-of-life, and fossil-fuel derived textiles



**Drive-up animal welfare standards globally,** embrace its status as an independent party to CITES, and recognise certification schemes such as Furmark® and Welfur.



## FURTHER INFORMATION

The European farming  
programme, Welfur

[www.sustainablefur.com/animalwelfare](http://www.sustainablefur.com/animalwelfare)

The global certification and traceability  
system, Furmark®

[www.furmark.com](http://www.furmark.com)

The British Fur Trade Association

[www.britishfur.co.uk](http://www.britishfur.co.uk)

If you would like further information  
on any aspect of the fur sector or  
would like to visit a fur farm,  
please contact us [info@britishfur.co.uk](mailto:info@britishfur.co.uk)

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