



**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**
UNITED KINGDOM

FUR FREE BRITAIN CAMPAIGN POLITICAL BRIEF

THE CASE FOR BANNING FUR SALES ACROSS THE UK



THE UK'S ROLE IN THE GLOBAL FUR TRADE

By allowing the sale of fur in the UK, we are exercising a double standard. Despite fur farming being banned across the UK since 2002, HMRC reports UK imports of around £75 million of fur each year – **we estimate this equates to some three million animal pelts annually.** By continuing to allow the sale of fur, the UK is outsourcing overseas the very same animal cruelty and suffering we rightly banned here nearly two decades ago. If the UK believes that fur farming is too cruel to be allowed here then, logically, it is too cruel to sell fur here.



Photo: Jo McArthur

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS HUMANE FUR FARMING

Sadly, the 'assurance schemes' of so-called 'high-welfare fur farming' promoted by the fur industry have been repeatedly and extensively proven not to provide animals with a life worth living. As well as using wholly inadequate welfare measures, these schemes are run, funded and audited by the fur industry and its affiliates. The scale of suffering in fur farming is unimaginable. More than 100 million animals are incarcerated in barren metal cages, typically less than one square metre in size, for their whole lives until they are gassed or anally electrocuted. While other segments of animal agriculture such as laying hens are shifting away from intensive farming, the fur trade remains completely reliant on, and unapologetic for, its battery cages. Our investigations repeatedly show that these caged wild animals, including foxes, mink and raccoon dogs, suffer physically and mentally, including resorting to self-mutilation and cannibalism.

CONSUMERS AND RETAILERS DO NOT WANT FUR PRODUCTS

A 2018 YouGov opinion poll showed that 69% of the British public support a fur ban, with only 8% stating opposition. In 2018 an e-petition calling for a ban on the sale of animal fur in the UK closed with 109,549 signatures, and a current petition run by our Fur Free Britain alliance stands at over 700,000 signatures.

By allowing the sale of animal fur, the UK is complicit in the fur industry's outmoded approach to animal husbandry and welfare.

Almost all UK high street stores are fur-free, and the Fur Free Retailer programme now has over 1,000 brands signed up, highlighting the growing public and corporate distaste for animal fur. An ever-growing list of high-profile fashion designers have also adopted fur-free policies, including Prada, Gucci, Burberry, Chanel and Versace.

CASE STUDY AB 44: CALIFORNIA FUR BAN

California recently became the first US state to ban the cruel and unnecessary fur trade within its borders. AB 44 makes it unlawful to sell or manufacture a new fur product in the state, with exemptions for used fur and fur used for religious reasons.

Over the last few years, California voters repeatedly showed deep concern about the well-being and humane treatment of animals, including animals killed for their fur. Recent polling revealed that 71% of Californians support a ban on the sale of fur products in the state.

Under this new law, AB 44, businesses across the state will have until 1 January 2023 to sell off remaining fur inventory, and to modify, or diversify their business practices. Retailers can and will transition to animal friendly alternatives.

The California ban acts as a clear pathway and encouragement for the UK to become the first country to enact a sales ban on fur. Politicians in Switzerland and Turkey are also presently advocating for national bans.



Photo: Oiketra Elamiliw

Because real fur can now be produced and sold more cheaply than fake fur, consumers have been faced with the problem of 'fake faux fur'. In recent years HSI UK and media partners including Sky News and the BBC have documented hundreds of cases of retailers selling real fur items described as fake fur. This was the subject of an Environment Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee Inquiry in 2018, and acting on our evidence both Trading Standards and the Advertising Standards Authority have taken action, but the problem still exists. Shoppers wanting to avoid the cruelty of animal fur cannot do so with confidence in the UK.

OPPORTUNITIES POST-BREXIT

- Current UK law bans the trade in fur of domestic cats and dog fur products, and fur from commercial seal slaughter (both derived from EU bans), but otherwise allows for the import and sale of animal fur, from a range of species.
- While the UK remains a member of the EU, the Government has stated that it does not believe it possible to introduce further restrictions relating to the fur trade, which could be deemed inconsistent with the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU by impairing the free movement of goods within the EU single market. In January 2019 the government said in response to an e-petition: "There will be an opportunity for government in the future, once we have left the EU...to consider further steps such as a ban on fur imports or a ban on sales."
- In 2020, as the Government negotiates a new trading relationship with the EU outside of the single market, it has the freedom to reflect public opinion and take a moral stand against an animal industry that is cruel, outdated and completely unnecessary. Brexit must be used as an opportunity to protect and enhance animal welfare standards.



Photo: Oiketra Elamiliw

FUR INDUSTRY GREEN-WASHING

Over recent years, the fur industry has invested heavily in a disingenuous campaign to present fur as 'eco-friendly', set against fake fur as a plastic product. Sustainability and landfill is of course an important imperative for the entire global fashion industry to address, but the fur trade is deliberately exploiting this concern in order to further its pro-fur agenda, and grossly exaggerates the relative role of fake fur as a pollutant, as faux fur accounts for a fraction of a percentage of the 80-100 billion garments made each year.

Claims that animal fur is in any way environmentally sound or 'natural' withstand no scrutiny, since animal fur carries a heavy environmental price tag. Intensively farming carnivorous wild animals requires huge amounts of feed (an estimated 500kg of chicken/fish feed is required to

produce 1kg of mink fur), producing huge amounts of polluting waste. A cocktail of toxic and carcinogenic chemicals is also used to stop the fur skin from decomposing as it would do naturally. The fur industry's green washing has even been challenged by advertising bodies; in response to one advert claiming it was 'eco-friendly to wear fur', the Advertising Standards Agency upheld a complaint that it was misleading and unsubstantiated by proper evidence.

Faux fur is also rapidly developing to become increasingly eco-friendly. Companies including DuPont, SmartFur and Ecopel are driving innovation in textile technology, developing new ways to make fake fur by using plant-based synthetics, biodegradable materials and recycled polyester. Leading British designers such as Stella McCartney and Shrimps are harnessing these new fabrics, putting British faux fur fashion firmly on the global map.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We are asking the Government to follow EFRA's recommendation to launch a public consultation on a UK fur sales ban. This could be used to solicit insights on how fur ban could be most effectively brought into law. A consultation would also allow an informed decision on a reasonable phase out period, which would enable the very small number of businesses reliant on animal fur to transition to alternative materials.

BENEFITS OF A FUR SALES BAN:

- Eliminate the market for some 2-3 million animals farmed each year
- Becoming the first country in the world to ban fur sales would cement the UK's reputation as a global leader in animal welfare, and set an important precedent that others would undoubtedly follow
- Reflect the public's long-standing moral objection to the fur trade
- Remove the double standard of having banned fur farming domestically, but continuing to import it from overseas
- Eliminate arbitrary trade restrictions for some species (cats, dogs and seals) and not others
- Help to stop real fur being sold as fake fur, providing greater consumer confidence.



ABOUT FUR FREE BRITAIN:

Fur Free Britain is a campaign led by animal welfare charity Humane Society International UK and supported by a coalition of respected national animal charities. For more information please visit www.FurFreeBritain.uk

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us via hsiuk@atlas-partners.co.uk