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INFORMATION

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Working Party on Animals and Veterinary Questions (Chief Veterinary Officers)
Subject:	CVO 12/03/2026 - AOB: Ban on Fur Farming - Information from Austrian delegation

Delegations will find in annex a note related to the AOB item to be raised by the Austrian delegation at the above meeting.

Draft NOTE by Austria supported by …….

Ban on Fur Farming – Request to the Commission to submit an appropriate proposal to ban the keeping and killing of animals for the sole or main purpose of fur production and the placement of farmed animal fur, and products containing such fur, on the EU market.

The keeping and killing of animals solely for their fur has been the subject of national bans within the European Union for the last 20 years. This process gained momentum in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was associated with SARS-CoV-2 infections in mink, and the subsequent culling of millions of animals. In 2022, the European Citizens' Initiative 'Fur Free Europe' was supported by 1.5 million citizens. The resulting, and recently published, scientific opinion from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) affirmed that the welfare of animals farmed for fur is severely compromised[1].

To date, a large majority of EU member states already have full bans on fur farming in place, with some more having partial bans or stricter requirements that have led to an effective ban. This has resulted in a scattered legal landscape; it falls short of growing public concern on this matter, whilst hindering the proper functioning of the internal market.

An EU-wide ban on fur farming and on the placing on the market of farmed fur products is the only harmonizing measure available to ensure the effective protection of fur animals in the EU. A ban on the import of farmed fur products would also prevent fur produced in fur farms outside the EU from entering the EU market. Moreover, it would provide for legal certainty and the possibility for clear compensations schemes. A ban on fur farming and the placing on the market of fur products would reflect a responsible, forward-looking stance that takes proper account of the broad spectrum of related issues.

The main problems associated with keeping fur animals are restricted movement, the inability to engage in species-appropriate behavior, overstimulation or understimulation (e.g., during handling), and stress caused by the presence or absence of other animals of the same species. Most of the animal welfare issues listed cannot be prevented or significantly improved within the framework of current husbandry systems. It is also currently impossible to predict the extent to which it will be possible to house fur animals in accordance with their needs in husbandry systems designed for fur production. The extent to which such husbandry could also be economically viable is also unclear. For this reason, banning the keeping of fur animals appears to be the only effective measure to end animal suffering, create legal certainty, and avoid unnecessary bureaucratic effort through new, even more complex husbandry requirements.

Therefore Austria supported by ……. request the Commission to submit an appropriate proposal to ban the keeping and killing of animals for the sole or main purpose of fur production and the placement of farmed animal fur, and products containing such fur, on the EU market, taking into account the following aspects:

[1] European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). 2025. *Welfare of Animals Kept for Fur Production*. EFSA Journal: Welfare of animals kept for fur production | EFSA

1. Reiterating the Union's obligation under Article 13 TFEU to "pay full regard to the welfare of animals", particularly in light of EFSA's conclusion that the welfare problems inherent in fur farming cannot be effectively remedied. It is ethically indefensible to keep essentially wild animals in such systems for the sole purpose of fur production.

2. Recalling that the Commission formerly committed to banning the use of cages in farming systems.[2] The commitment to "end the cage age" has been restated recently[3], a promise that is irreconcilable with a continuation of fur farming, an industry that heavily relies on the use of caged systems. Not only is the feasibility of alternative keeping systems very uncertain, so is their potential to improve animal welfare. This is therefore not a viable consideration.

3. Reiterating that 1.5 million citizens signed the European citizens' initiative 'Fur Free Europe', showing the clear public concern regarding fur farming and the strong support for a ban, including on the sale of farmed fur products.

4. Noting that American mink, the main species still farmed for fur within the Union, has recently been added to the list of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern, leading to a ban on their breeding and production. Decision for derogations, allowing to continue their farming for fur, on the grounds of "compelling public interest, including those of a social or economic nature" would be incongruous with the above and with the fact that the fur industry has been in a worldwide decline for years.

5. Noting that EU fur farming produced 6.3 million pelts in 2024, worth only an estimated €183 million in sales value, whilst employing around 2000 full-time equivalents. Those numbers are comparable to those of the long-outdated video rental sector. Moreover, EU fur farming has been unprofitable for several years as pelt prices remain below production costs, in 2024 it reported negative gross value added of -€9 million, reducing GDP rather than adding economic value to the EU economy[4].

[2] The Commission's official communication to the 'End the Cage Age' ECI: https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/api/files/C(2021)4747_0/090166e5df30600f?rendition=false.
The Commission's Q&A on the 'End the Cage Age' ECI: QANDA_21_3298_EN.pdf
[3] Commission communication: A Vision for Agriculture and Food: eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0075.
[4] Carpenter (2025) - A full-cost account of the EU fur industry.