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**The Facts Behind the Motion to Ban Fur Products in the City of Los Angeles**

One of this nation's oldest, historic and regulated trades once again finds itself being slandered by sensationalism, lies and deceit in an effort by anti-animal use advocates to influence elected officials. The fur industry is no stranger to these tactics. This document is a good faith effort to set the record straight and present elected officials in the City of Los Angeles with the real facts.

It is noteworthy that the text of the motion used by the bill sponsors is almost word-for-word derived from a 2009 paper prepared by the Humane Society of the U.S. entitled Toxic Fur (<http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/fur/toxic-fur-january-22-2009.pdf>). It has also been the experience of the industry that when legislators are willing to evaluate the facts developed by animal experts, wildlife management specialists and other veterinary professionals, they reject these proposals. These claims are merely an attempt by anti-animal use groups and animal rights extremists to pursue an agenda that would deny individuals their freedom of choice. Should this motion pass, it will inflict economic harm on thousands of small businesses, many of which have been carrying on the traditions of their family businesses for many generations.

*More than fifty million animals including foxes, chinchilla, minks, raccoon, dogs and rabbits are killed for their fur every year.*

**FACT- While the fur trade is global, and many different species are used, the United States does not allow for trade in domesticated dog or cat. See 19 U.S.C §1308. Further, the fur industry does not trade in endangered species and only deals with the sustainable yield of abundant, well managed wildlife populations.**

*According to the World Society for the Protection of Animals, eighty-five percent of these animals are raised and killed on factory fur farms.*

**FACT - The term factory farms is a term coined and focus-group tested by the anti-animal use organizations to elicit an emotional response. North American mink and fox farms are individually owned, family farms, with each animal monitored daily.**

*The fur industry is one that has consistently been associated with inhumane practices.*

**FACT- Only by anti-animal use groups in their campaigns to destroy the fur industry has the industry been accused of "inhumane practices". In fact, it is rare for a trapper or farmer to be cited for a violation of any type of regulation that governs their individual activities. The same is true for the industry as a whole which has oversight at the international, national and local levels.**

*Animals who are cultivated solely for their fur spend their lives in cramped cages and are subject to deplorable living conditions.*

**FACT – Animals used in the fur trade are not raised solely for their fur. While fur is the primary product, the entire animal is used. From mink oil to animal feed to tribal religious items, nothing goes to waste. Independent research data has determined that the animals exhibit less stress-related behaviors when housed in smaller spaces (think burrows). The care and handling of mink on farms is based upon science with independent researchers used in the development of standards covering pen size, animal welfare, feeding, animal husbandry, vaccination and humane euthanasia.**

*These animals are then killed in inhumane ways to preserve the quality of the pelt above all else.*

**FACT- Euthanasia practices used throughout the industry are based on species specific**

recommendations provided by preeminent veterinary organizations around the world and have evolved with new technologies and scientific findings. Mink are euthanized using carbon monoxide. They are unconscious within 5 seconds and expire within 30 seconds.

This is scientifically proven and verified by independent veterinarians around the world to be the most humane way of euthanizing mink.

*Common practices include gassing, electrocution, suffocation and neck breaking.*

**FACT- All animals are euthanized according to the recommendations of the AVMA or equivalent in their respective countries.**

*Electrocuting fur-bearing animals anally and genitally is a slaughter method used frequently in the industry to limit damage to the fur.*

**FACT –European governmental standards and those promulgated by the AVMA govern the euthanizing of foxes. They are never genitally electrocuted.**

*New York is the only state where this is illegal. Commonly, animals are stunned before they are skinned but some remain conscious during the process- at times still breathing after they are skinned.*

**FACT- Foxes are stunned before being euthanized as set out by AVMA standards or equivalent in various countries. They are never skinned while still alive. It is dangerous, inhumane and makes no practical business sense.**

*The fur industry is one where “best current practice” involves the use of a system with very low welfare potential.*

**FACT- North American standards use the best available science to determine optimum welfare criteria along with other rigorous mandates. In the U.S., the standards have been updated every three to five years since 1986. Over 90 percent of mink in the U.S. come from farms that are certified to standards put together with independent scientists, veterinarians, animal welfare experts and others. A new traceability and certification process is being implemented globally by the fur industry. It will result in the independent auditing of mink farms by third-party animal welfare experts and will require on-going inspections every 15 to 18 months. The auction houses that sell the farmed fur have committed to begin to sell fur that comes from certified farms in the year 2020. The industry continues to spend millions of dollars working with outside scientific professionals to further answer how programs can be updated for state of the art husbandry and trapping activities.**

*In a signed letter to British parliament 50 veterinarians and animal experts including Jane Goodall point to the inherent welfare deficiencies in the trade, “Wild animals on fur farms live their lives in wire-floored cages thousands of times smaller than the natural territories.*

**FACT- Ranch-raised mink have been domesticated and selectively bred for over 150 animal generations. Much like cattle, they do not display the natural instincts of their wild cousins. In this debate, all references to “wild animals” are irrelevant. With regards to veterinarians, it is important to note that the vast majority of those opposed to the fur industry are small pet practitioners, unlike veterinarians who specialize in work with large animals and farm animals.**

*They are denied their biological inheritance to exhibit natural behaviors and stimuli such as hunting, digging and swimming.” In the state of California, wild animals in captivity must be kept in enclosures that comply with statutory minimums. One fox would require 80'square feet and a mink, 30 square feet. These animals must also be given the opportunity to replicate their behaviors from the wild (Cal. Code Regs. §671). In fur farming, the space required for the same animal are a few square feet at best.*

**FACT- The motion improperly blurs the legal distinction between wild animals and animals raised on fur farms. The reference to the standards arising out of Cal. Code Regs §671 are applicable to wild animals in captivity and have no relevance to domesticated farm animals, some of which would be severely harmed if they were raised in accordance with such standards. It is for this reason that mink farms are regulated throughout the United States by State Departments of Agriculture, whose officials are familiar with the animal welfare standards appropriate to farm animals such as ranched mink. Indeed, California itself recognizes the distinction in Cal. Civ. Code §996, which specifically addresses the legal status of fur bearing animals that have been brought into, or born in captivity upon any farm or ranch for the purpose of cultivating or pelting their furs. The statute specifically classifies such animals as “domestic animals” for purpose of any statute or law relating to domestic animals, farming or animal husbandry or to the encouragement of agriculture. This distinction as it applies to fur bearing animals, which are raised in**

**captivity, is also addressed in Cal. Civ. Code §3482.5 (California's Right to Farm Act), under which the breeding of fur bearing animals is deemed "agricultural activity" for taxation and other regulatory purposes.**

*Instances of stereotypical behavior indicating psychological distress due these conditions are well documented, including repetitive pacing and spinning and cannibalism.*

**FACT-Due to many years of domestication, these animals do not display the same traits as their wild cousins. For example, the excitement exhibited by farmed animals at feeding time are wrongly interpreted by the layman as stress or anxiety – which is called stereotypical behavior.**

*Trapping wild animals is also part of the industry. The most popular form of trapping among the top three wild fur pelt producers- the U.S., Canada and Russia- is the leghold trap.*

**FACT- To say one trap type is the most popular lacks an understanding of restraining traps or various other types of traps and their systems. Each device is used for specific purposes, habitat conditions and the species being trapped. It is also important to note that the foothold trap is used to help with the re-introduction of some species that have been extirpated from certain habitats. For example, the foothold was used to capture gray wolves to reintroduce them into Yellowstone National Park. It was also used to capture 4,000 + otters for reintroduction along with many other species. These same devices that used to relocate animals for various reasons are the same devices used to harvest furbearers. See Trap Use Survey, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: [https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3115/2106/4349/FINAL\\_AFWA\\_Trap\\_Use\\_Report\\_2015\\_ed\\_2016.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3115/2106/4349/FINAL_AFWA_Trap_Use_Report_2015_ed_2016.pdf)**

*Trapping has been declared inhumane by the American Veterinary Medical Association and the National Animal Control Association.*

**FACT- The AVMA DOES NOT consider trapping to be inhumane. "The AVMA opposes the use of conventional (non-padded, non-offset) steel jawed foothold traps (also called leghold traps). When the capture of wildlife must occur (e.g. for management or research purposes), humane traps and techniques should be employed that minimize injury, stress, pain, and suffering to wildlife while also seeking to avoid capture of non-target animals. The AVMA recommends that trappers should be trained to use traps and techniques correctly and traps should be checked at least once every 24 hours. The AVMA encourages active research on improvement of capture devices and trapping methods for wildlife, taking into regard the provision of good welfare. Anyone using traps should refer to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Policy for Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States". SEE <https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Pages/Trapping-and-Steel-jawed-Leghold-Traps.aspx>**

**NACA is predominately a dog and cat association. In fact, many respected leading international organizations support trapping including: The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); the World Wildlife Fund; The Wildlife Society; The World Organization for Animal Health; The Convention on Biological Diversity. Further, according to the Northeast Furbearer Resources Technical Committee, "regulated trapping is a sustainable use of wildlife resources, and does not, in any way, threaten the continued existence of any wildlife population." (May, 2009)**

*Many countries and some states, including California, have banned the use of this trap because of the cruelty it inflicts on animals (Cal. Fish & Game Code 4004). Los Angeles previously banned its use more than 25 years ago.*

**FACT- All traps are not banned in California or Los Angeles. Traps come in many makes and models that are designed for specific situations. Foothold traps are banned but other types of devices are still commonly used. See Sec. 53.06.3. Trapping Permit Requirements, Los Angeles Municipal Code. To purchase a trapping license in California, SEE <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Trapping>**

*Fur is also damaging to the environment and contributes to water and air pollution.*

**FACT - The production of fur is more sustainable and environmentally friendly than virtually all other fabrics. In fact, fur farms are net pollution consumers. Fur is natural, organic and renewable. Water used on a fur farm is often rain water collected by the farm. If anything, fur farming contributes to the "circular economy" because the entire animal is used. Mink and fox are often fed protein left over from fast food restaurants in the U.S. or the leftover protein from abattoirs that are not used for human consumption and would otherwise end up in landfill. The manure is used as a rich fertilizer for agriculture crops.**

The bone meal from the animal is also used as a fertilizer component; even the ash from the composting of carcasses is useful — it's used as a component in cement, concrete and asphalt. The fat from the mink is used to produce biofuel or as a lure for the crab fishing industry.

*According to a study by Michigan State University, the U.S. mink industry alone adds almost 1,000 tons of nitrogen and phosphorus to the environment each year. Fur is also heavily processed with harmful carcinogenic chemicals, including chromium and formaldehyde, which can be damaging to human health and also make fur difficult to biodegrade.*

**FACT -** This study was never published by Michigan State University or Ford Motor Company as it is often reported by animal rights organizations. This report does indeed exist, although it is very old – it was published in 1979 and was published by a student who attended Michigan State. The author, one Gregory H. Smith, is identified as an engineering graduate of Michigan University, who worked for Ford. But he prepared his report at the request of *The Fund for Animals* (a Michigan-based animal-rights group), “to augment its arguments for abolishing the cruelties to animals resulting from the procurement of natural animal’s furs for human adornment”.

Further, for fur to remain soft and supple, it is “dressed” and the dressing trade is represented by International Fur Dressers and Dyers Association (IFDDA), an organization that is continually developing and promoting environmentally friendly methods. The dressing and dyeing process uses a limited number of chemical substances that are non-hazardous (e.g. sea salt, alum). Nevertheless, the process is tightly regulated by regulated by the Environmental Protection Act in the U.S. In Canada, the corresponding regulation is the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. The IFDDA is also beginning a new certification process that will require independent verification of adherence to standards.

*The amount of energy required to make a coat from real fur is over fifteen times that needed to produce fake fur.*

**FACT-** See above; this number comes from the report discussed above. Fake fur and other synthetic materials are petroleum based, non-renewable, and non-biodegradable. These man-made materials, when washed, release thousands of tiny plastic lint fibers into waste water that are then released into oceans and rivers where they are ingested by fish, mammals and sea birds and, in turn, are ingested by humans. California, recognizing the damaging environmental impact and the potential threat to humans, recently debated legislation that would require labeling to warn about the use of microfibers. A recent study by the International Fur Federation confirms that fur decomposes far more quickly than the fake plastic-based synthetic materials. The analysis was carried out by independent experts from the Organic Waste Systems laboratory in Ghent, Belgium, a world-leading specialist in biodegradability and compost ability. The laboratory examined how both real and fake fur degraded in conditions set up to mimic closed landfill conditions, the so-called “anaerobic biodegradation”. After a fur garment is restyled and reused many times over and often after several decades of use – if it is thrown away, the garment itself decomposes quickly. The tests also looked at the average biodegradation of a number of natural products and found that real fur degrades at the same rate as an oak or willow tree leaf. According to the analysis, the natural fur samples biodegraded swiftly, starting to disintegrate within days as micro-organisms consumed the carbon inside the fur. The synthetic fake fur, however, showed no biodegradation at all. According to the researchers, this was not unexpected due to the composition of the synthetic fibres. In addition, synthetic fashion materials are known to break down into ever smaller pieces, eventually forming microplastic fibres – a major contributor to plastic pollution.

*Fur farming has been banned and restrictions have been placed on the trade and sale of fur in a number of countries. Several countries around the world have banned some or all fur farming, including the UK, Denmark, and the Netherlands, one of the world's biggest mink suppliers. Israel and the UK are currently considering import/sale bans and New Zealand and India currently have import bans in place.*

**FACTS-** New Zealand relies on trapping to control brushtailed opossums (an estimated 130 million dollars per year trade and employs 1500 people.) These pelts and other fur products are not banned. However, they do have an import ban on fur products from other countries, the same as India. The fur trade believes that these two bans are in violation of WTO agreements. Denmark has not banned fur farming. In fact, Denmark is one of the leading world-wide producers of mink (Approximately 17 million per year). It is a leading

agricultural export in Denmark and enjoys strong government support. When fur farming was eliminated in the UK, there were 13 farms remaining and these farms were bought-out by the government. In the Netherlands, the ten-year phase-out of fur farming goes into effect 2024. It is estimated that of the 170 fur farms, the government would have had to pay 900 Million Euro – this continues to be contested.

*In the state of California, West Hollywood banned the sale of fur in 2013, Berkeley in 2017 and most recently, San Francisco in 2018.*

**FACT-** The supposed “fur ban” in West Hollywood is indeed not a ban, but a symbolic gesture in that the vast majority of species used by the U.S. fur trade can be legally sold.

Based on a ruling arising out of the ban in West Hollywood, the California Superior Court ruled that the West Hollywood ban was preempted by State law. Specifically, section 3039(b) of the California Fish and Game Code provides that products made from furbearing mammal and non-game mammals lawfully taken under the authority of a trapping licensing may be purchased or sold at any time. The Court invalidated a portion of the West Hollywood ordinance, and fur products meeting this criterion are now sold.

The San Francisco and Berkeley ordinances acknowledge this exception, as well. Moreover, fur from lamb products (e.g. shearling) may be sold in San Francisco.

*Also, whether due to the cruelty inherent in the industry, its negative environmental impact, or a demand for compassionate fashion, many luxury designers have recently prohibited the use of fur in their collections. Most recently, Michael Kors, Jimmy Choo, Versace and Gucci have made commitments to remove fur from their line of products.*

**FACT-** Despite anti-animal use organization claims many of the designers mentioned above continue to use fur and all of the designers continue to use silk, wool, leather, and skins. (See attached photograph).

*An animal killed for fur will give its life solely to become a piece of clothing, a key chain, trim on a jacket and nothing else.*

**FACT -** Virtually every part of the animal will be used. In addition to fur, mink is used in producing fertilizer, organic compost, oils for a variety of products, bait for the crabbing industry, and bio mass for energy production. Essentially, the entire animal is recycled.

*Today, we are a city of ethically conscious shoppers. Considering the wide array of alternatives, any demand for fur products does not justify the unnecessary killing and the cruel treatment of fur-bearing animals. As more cities and countries pass restrictive legislation, more companies will stop using fur and alternatives will continue to improve. In recent decades, Los Angeles has shown itself to be a world-leader city regarding animal welfare. The state legislature has also considered and passed various animal production measures including prohibiting the sale of products that are inhumane.*

**FACT -** Banning a product does nothing to promote awareness of animal welfare nor lead to animal welfare improvements. Rather than education, it simply ends discussion. Consumers have spoken. The prominence of fur on the runways for the fall 2018 collections just completed in NY, London, Paris and Milan reflects the popularity of fur fashion and the strong consumer demand. Natural fur is sustainable and environmentally friendly and strict animal welfare standards are in place in the U.S and North America to ensure the humane treatment of animals. But in the absence of real natural fur, retailers will likely move to fake fur to meet this demand. By inadvertently promoting fake fur, a petroleum-based product that is not renewable, sustainable or biodegradable, and releases thousands of tiny plastic lint fibers into waste water when washed the LA city council would be contradicting the leadership position they have established in enacting environmentally responsible policies that recognize the harmful impacts of plastics on our environment.

*Breeding and killing animals solely for their fur is no longer acceptable in the 21st century.*

**FACT -** Fur is a natural, sustainable and highly regulated product. The entire animal is used and a great many Americans do find fur acceptable. Widely respected polls such as the Gallup poll prove that the majority of Americans find the wearing of fur to be “morally acceptable” while other polls, such as a recent poll by independent research group Nanos and Associates shows that the overwhelming majority of respondents, whether fur wearers or not, felt that consumers should have the freedom of choice to make their own buying decisions. Still nothing tells a truer, more honest story than the cash register. If consumers weren’t buying the product, retailers would not be offering the product and designers and manufacturers would not be making the product.

*By eliminating the sale of new fur products, Los Angeles has the opportunity to promote a*

*community awareness of animal welfare and to continue to lead in the field of progressive animal welfare reform.*

**FACT - This proposal would eliminate only a small amount of fur sales as decided by the California Superior Court. As previously noted, the California Superior Court correctly addresses this issue in a legal proceeding arising out of the proposed West Hollywood ordinance and, which has enabled the sale of many furbearing species.**

*I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Attorney be requested to prepare and present an ordinance which would prohibit the manufacture and sale of fur products, including apparel made in whole or in part of fur, or any fashion accessory, including but not limited to handbags, shoes, hats, earmuffs, jewelry, and key chains made in whole or in part of fur, with exceptions for the sale of used fur products, beginning January 1, 2020*

**FACT – This motion must be rejected. It is based on distorted and manufactured facts; it is legally flawed; it raises serious questions about the role of a governmental entity in denying consumers the right of free choice; and it undermines the economic health and welfare of many privately held small business that have existed in the City of Los Angeles for decades, and threatens hundreds of jobs based on a symbolic gesture that has done nothing to improve the welfare of any furbearing mammals.**