



Date: 2/6/18
Submitted in PAW Committee
Council File No: 18-0530
Item No. 10
Deputy: Adam R. Lid

February 6, 2019

Dear Respected Members of the Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Fur Commission USA, the national trade association representing the mink farmers in the US, to provide you with information and facts about fur farming, animal welfare standards and farm certification in the US. I know that our industry representatives have presented you with rebuttals to the lies and false allegations presented in the HSUS White paper that prompted the discussion of this fur ban, and though they have asked for the opportunity to sit down and educate the council on farming practices, there have been no discussions of this nature. I request that you delay consideration of the proposed ordinance to allow time for proper information gathering and due diligence in this matter.

Providing animals with humane care is an ethical obligation of all livestock farmers, while it is also common sense as the healthiest animals produce the finest pelts. American farms produce the world's finest mink, drawing international buyers by the thousands from the word over. Producing the best mink is a reward for providing the best possible animal care.

In 1985, the US mink industry established one of the first formalized humane care certification programs in US agriculture. These standards for the humane production of farmed mink were developed by farmers, veterinarians, welfare experts and leading animal scientists, and are updated regularly as new scientific information becomes available. The overwhelming majority of US mink production comes from farms certified under this program.

The most recent update to the *Standard Guidelines for the Operation of Mink Farms in the United States* is presently under scientific peer review. The Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization (PAACO), a well-known and highly respected company is conducting the review. Besides applying the newest animal science to the standards covering nutritional needs, appropriate housing, veterinary care, disposition and reproductive needs, stress, and environmental management; we also now included the following:

Extensive employee training protocols in proper mink handling, recognizing disease, injury or distress and the proper treatments, use of all farm materials and equipment, euthanasia, and bio-security.

- Protocols for extreme temperatures, kit fostering, and common illnesses
- Detailed record keeping and daily monitoring of animals.
- Pen enhancements to address physical and psychological concerns.
- Increased farm inspections
- Transparency

These updates qualify US mink farmers for the *FurMark* seal, a global humane care program supported by the world's major fashion houses, and under which the European mink producers participate. The world's major auction facilities have committed to marketing only mink certified under the *FurMark* beginning in 2021.

In addition to the humane care program, U. S. mink farmers are governed by each state's Department of Agriculture and abide by a myriad of other Federal, State and regional regulations governing livestock operations and environmental stewardship. Farmers euthanize their animals according to the recommendations of the *American Veterinary Medical Association's Guide to Euthanasia*

As any veterinarian will tell you, an animal's health will manifest in the quality of the fur. And as

the U.S. farmers command the best prices in the highly competitive world fur market, it goes to show that animal care and welfare is our highest priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael Whelan".

Michael J. Whelan
Executive Director
Fur Commission USA