



The Honourable Minister Tihomir Jakovina
Ministry of Agriculture
Ulica grada Vukovara 78
10 000 Zagreb
Croatia

Brussels, 30th April 2015

Dear Minister Jakovina,

I am writing to you on behalf of the European Parliament's Intergroup on the Welfare & Conservation of Animals. This Intergroup is one of the first-established and longest running in the European Parliament and has been at the forefront of new initiatives like the EU ban on the import and trade of seal products.

As the Intergroup on the Welfare & Conservation of Animals we strongly support the decision by the Croatian government to ban fur farming, including the breeding of chinchillas for fur. We encourage the government to move ahead with the phasing out period as planned.

We have been following the developments in Europe with more and more countries banning or phasing out fur farming. We have been very pleased to notice that Croatia was among the first European countries to ban fur farming already in 2007, with a phasing out period until 2017. Croatia thus took the lead on animal welfare, together with countries like the UK, Northern Ireland and Austria.

We would like to present three important remarks on why Croatia should follow through with a full ban on fur farming, including chinchillas, as of 2017.

1. The fur industry is ignoring formal recommendations The Council Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes covers animals kept for fur production. However, there is a clear discrepancy what EU law stipulates and what reality witnesses.

The improvements recommended already in 2001 by the European Commission's Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (SCAHAW) have still not taken place in fur farms. One of the recommendations of the Scientific Committee was that *'Since current husbandry systems cause serious problems for all species of animals reared for fur, efforts should be made for all species to design housing systems which fulfil the needs of the animals'*.¹

Animal welfare problems related to chinchillas bred for fur include: lack of environmental enrichment in relation to nest boxes; restricted access to sand baths, height of cages; and the large plastic collars worn by females.²

2. Other European countries are banning or reducing fur production

A number of countries have banned fur farming or adopted stricter animal welfare regulations as the fur farming practice does not meet the formal

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Established in 1983

¹ European Commission (2001): The welfare of animals kept for fur production. Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare. Adopted on 12-13 December 2001

² European Commission (2001): The welfare of animals kept for fur production. Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare. Adopted on 12-13 December 2001

requirements for animal welfare. For example, the last Swedish chinchilla farm closed last year after stricter animal welfare regulations came into force.

The newest development is that several countries in Europe have concluded that the current fur farming practice severely affects with the welfare of the animals. The Republic of Macedonia banned all fur farming as of last year. In Belgium, the region of Wallonia has banned fur farming as of January this year. The region of Brussels has started a similar process because of the cruelty inherent to the practice.

- 3. The voice of the citizens must be heard** One of the roles of the Intergroup is to bring citizen's concerns on animal welfare to the doorstep of the Members of the European Parliament. As you may be aware, 73 % of the Croatian people agreed that breeding animals for fur should be legally banned in Croatia (SPEM Communication Group, Animal Friends Croatia, 2006). To follow through with the ban and the planned phase out period until 2017, including for the breeding of chinchillas for fur, is in line with public opinion.

As the European Parliament's Intergroup on Animal Welfare & Conservation is working to ensure that full regard is paid to the welfare requirements of animals, we strongly support the Croatian government in its work to ensure high animal welfare standards at Member State level. We therefore encourage the government to phase out chinchilla farming by 2017 as planned.

Such a decision would be in line with modern developments on animal ethics, scientific research and with the views of the Croatian citizens.

I am looking forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Janusz Wojciechowski, MEP
President of the Intergroup for Animal Welfare & Conservation