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21 April 2016

Dear Animal Friends Croatia

Thank you for contacting me about the Croatian ban on breeding animals for fur production. As you know this practice is banned in the UK, and for very good reasons. All fur animals are of course mammals, and one characteristic of mammals is the close relationship formed between mother and offspring, closer than occurs in any other group of animals. Breeding such animals for fur causes great emotional distress as young animals are separated from their mothers, who have to undergo repeated pregnancies only to lose each litter again. It is not economically viable to provide environments and management practices that meet the legal requirement to satisfy the animals' behavioural needs.

Europe is moving slowly to become a continent where the needs of animals are given the consideration they deserve. The most recent official Eurobarometer poll of the views of European citizens towards animal welfare (produced by the European Commission in December 2015, Eurobarometer number 422) found that 94% consider it important to consider the welfare of farmed animals, with 82% considering that welfare standards need to be improved. This is a staggering level of public interest and support for a topic that is often considered niche. It is doubtful that European citizens agree so much on almost any other topic.

As an animal welfare scientist I have worked closely on the effects of confinement and intensive farming systems for over 30 years. In my opinion it would be a highly retrograde step to allow the farming of chinchillas for fur as I do not believe their welfare could be protected in current management systems.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Nicol".

Prof Christine Nicol