

STATES OF JERSEY



FUR PRODUCTS: PETITION

**Lodged au Greffe on 6th June 2006
by Senator S. Syvret**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to agree that a total ban on the importation of fur and fur-trimmed products into Jersey, and on the sale in the Island of such products, should be implemented and to request the Ministers for Economic Development and Home Affairs, in consultation with other Ministers as appropriate, to bring forward for approval the necessary legislation to give effect to the ban.

SENATOR S. SYVRET

REPORT

I am presenting this petition on behalf of the 2,505 signatories who feel strongly that society should do all it can to minimise the needless suffering of animals. Jersey, like the United Kingdom, has high standards of legal and ethical protection for animals. Unfortunately most of the world doesn't. Virtually all of the world's fur products are produced in circumstances that most people would find truly shocking. Some animals are farmed in barbaric conditions and are not killed humanely; in many cases they will be literally skinned alive. Other animals – many endangered species included – will be trapped in their habitat. The most common method used is the steel jaw leg-hold trap. Animals may be trapped by these devices for days in agony as the metal teeth bite deeper into their bones. Some animals will actually bite through the trapped limb in an attempt to escape. These traps also maim and kill large numbers of “non-target” species.

Some in the fur industry might attempt to claim that certain furs can be obtained “ethically”. The fact is that the vast majority of furs are rendered with absolute savagery. Even if a claim of humane production were to be taken seriously, there is simply no reliable way of differentiating between such supposed products and the rest. As a society, we can make our contribution to stopping this trade by introducing a ban on the importation and sale of fur products. The Island is rightly proud to host the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. This proposition is an opportunity for the Assembly to demonstrate a broader commitment to animal welfare.

Many members may have little knowledge of this issue so by way of background information I reproduce two documents as appendices. The first is the summary of an important document which presents the arguments against fur farming. The full text is readily available on the web. The second demonstrates the barbarity of hunting methods used to trap animals in the wild. What is clear is that whether fur is taken from animals that are farmed or captured from the wild, both methods of obtaining fur are barbaric and needlessly cruel. The only thing we can do to deter this trade is to take our community out of the market.

Financial and manpower statement

If approved, some Law Drafting time would clearly be needed to produce the necessary legislation. It is not envisaged that such a law would require any additional resources to that which is already employed at our ports to enforce the CITES Convention on trade in endangered species, to which we are signatories.

The Ethical Case Against Fur Farming

A statement by an international group of academics,
including ethicists, philosophers and theologians.

About the Author

The Revd Professor Andrew Linzey is a member of the Faculty of Theology in the University of Oxford and holds the world's first post in Ethics, Theology and Animals – the Bede Jarret Senior Research Fellowship – at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford. He is also Honorary Professor in the University of Birmingham, and Special Professor at Saint Xavier University, Chicago. From 1992-6, he was Special Professor in Theology at the University of Nottingham, and in 1996 was appointed Visiting Professor at the Koret School of Veterinary Medicine, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 2001, he was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by the Archbishop of Canterbury in recognition of his “unique and massive pioneering work” on “the rights and welfare of God’s sentient creatures”.

The Ethical Case Against Fur Farming

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including ethicists, philosophers and theologians.

Summary

1. An increasing number of European countries have, or are in the process of, introducing legislation to curtail, or prohibit, fur farming, including Italy, Austria, Sweden and the Netherlands. Last year, fur farming was outlawed in England and Wales on the ground of ‘public morality’. Similar legislation has now been passed in Scotland. (paras 1.1-1.2)
2. Concern for the right treatment of animals has a long legislative history. Society has a clear stake in safeguarding animals from acts of cruelty. Human beings benefit from living in a society where cruelty is actively discouraged. (paras 2.1-2.3)
3. The evidence shows that it is unreasonable, even perfidious, to suppose that fur farming does not impose suffering on what are essentially wild animals kept in barren environments in which their behavioural needs are frustrated. (paras 3.2-3.6)
4. Growing ethical concern for animals has been reinforced by considerable intellectual work on the status of animals. There is an emerging consensus among ethicists for fundamental change. (para 4.1)
5. There is a strong, rational case for animal protection. Animals make a special moral claim upon us because, *inter alia*, they are morally innocent, unable to give or withhold their consent, or vocalise their needs, and because they are wholly vulnerable to human exploitation. These considerations make the infliction of suffering upon them not easier – but harder to justify. (paras 4.2-4.4)
6. Law has a proper role in defending the weak and the vulnerable from exploitation, including animals and children. (para 5.1)
7. There is increasing evidence of a link between the abuse of animals and other forms of violence, notably against women and children. It is an increasingly viable assumption that a world in which abuse to animals goes unchecked is bound to be a less morally safe world for human beings. (para 5.2)

8. Those who regard the infliction of suffering on animals as intrinsically objectionable rightly oppose fur farming. In their view, there are certain acts against vulnerable subjects that are so morally outrageous that they can never be morally licit. (para 6.1)
9. Fur farming is, however, also unacceptable to those who hold that the infliction of suffering can sometimes be justified. Fur farming fails a basic test of moral necessity. It is wholly unjustifiable to subject animals to prolonged suffering for trivial ends, such as fur coats or fashion accessories. Fur is a non-essential luxury item. (paras 6.2-6.3)
10. It is sometimes argued that fur farming is justifiable because it is consistent with religious notions that animals can be used for human benefit. But Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have never held that our use of animals should be illimitable or without moral constraint. (paras 8.2-8.3)
11. The claim that banning fur farming is an infringement of legitimate freedom is untenable; many previous cruelties (now illegal) have been defended on that basis. There can be no civil right to be cruel. (paras 9.1-9.2)
12. It is sometimes held that Member States should wait for the European Commission to act on issues of animal welfare. In fact, under the 1999 protocol, Member States already have the responsibility to 'fully consider animal welfare' as well as the freedom to initiate appropriate legislation. One Commissioner has publicly stated that some Member States are failing to comply with even their existing responsibilities. (paras 11.1-11.2)
13. In a democratic society, the law should properly reflect our changed ethical perception of animals and, specifically, the public's long-standing opposition to fur farming. (para 12.2)
14. There is an overwhelming case for the abolition of fur farming on ethical grounds. We urge all EU countries to give urgent consideration to such legislation on the ground of public morality. (para 13.2)

CAFT FACTSHEET: Trapping

The Leghold Trap

Every year some 10 million animals are trapped in the wild for their fur, caught by leghold traps, body grip traps (Conibeat trap) and wire snares. As the leghold trap is the most common type of trap (around 75% of the total ‘wild harvest’ in both Canada and USA is caught by leghold traps – [1,p9]) this report mainly concentrates on that device.

88 countries have banned the use of the leghold trap because of its cruelty. Banned in England and Wales since 1958 the leghold trap is a barbaric device. These steel traps work by clamping the animals’ leg, biting deep into the flesh. The victims may have to wait a long time, growing weaker and weaker through pain and attempts to escape, before the trapper returns to kill them. Bullets are not used to kill, as this would damage the pelt. Instead, the animal will be clubbed or suffocated. Many chew their legs off in a vain attempt to escape the suffering. In their struggle they will cause other injuries, such as broken bones and teeth. These traps have remained largely unchanged for more than a hundred years. In 1863 Charles Darwin said of them: “It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the suffering thus endured from fear, from acute pain, maddened by thirst, and by vain attempts to escape.”

Trap Injuries

There have been plenty of studies into the effect of leghold traps, and all reveal the cruelty inherent in this device. The two metal jaws of the trap slam shut on the animals paw when they stand on it. Although the initial impact of the trap causes injury it is the attempts to escape the trap that cause major damage. The trapped animal, in desperate attempts to escape, will rip her flesh, break bones, sever muscles and tendons, knock out teeth as she bites the trap, even chew off the trapped limb.

The gnawing off of a limb is so common that it has been given the term ‘wringing off’ by trappers. It is estimated that up to one in every four trapped animals escapes by chewing off her own foot [2].

Here are the results of just a few of the studies into leghold traps [3]:

- A study in Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge over a 4 year period found that 27.6% of mink, 24% of racoon, and 26% of trapped fox would bite off their limbs in hopes of surviving. Most probably died of blood loss, infection, and inability to hunt with an amputated leg;
- A 1980 study found that 37% of racoons mutilated themselves when caught in a leghold trap;
- A Swedish trapping campaign, conducted shortly before leghold traps were banned, found that of 645 trapped foxes 514 were seriously injured. Over 200 of the foxes had knocked out teeth as they bit the trap. Some of the foxes had knocked out 18 teeth – consider how desperate they must have been to escape that trap.

Each type of leghold trap is designed for a specific species or size of animal. But of course the trap cannot distinguish between animals and can cause even more horrific injuries. Traps are designed to restrain an animal until the trapper returns, rather than kill her outright. Laws vary in different areas. In some states of the USA traps should be checked every 36 hours, but of course not everyone takes notice of that. In some areas, such as Canada or Alaska, it may be open-ended due to the vastness. One former trapper writes: “In the far north, trappers rarely have to kill captured animals because of the days required to check traplines. Most animals are either frozen to death or die from a combination of freezing and starvation.” [4,p21] It’s not just trap injuries, thirst, starvation or hypothermia that can kill the animal. Some are even eaten by predators who happen to stumble across an ‘easy meal’.

Killing

If the animal is still alive when the trapper returns she/he will want to kill the animal in a way that does not damage the pelt.

As such bullets are rarely used. Common methods include beating the animal to death or crushing her by stamping on her chest. A popular book on trapping is published by the California Department of Fish and Game and is called 'Get Set to Trap'. It gives helpful advice on killing trapped animals: "It is highly recommended that the animal be struck two times, once to render it unconscious and again to render it dead or comatose. To ensure death pin the head with one foot and stand on the chest ... with the other foot for several minutes. ... To be sure the furbearer is dead, touch the eye or mouth of the animal with the striking tool and watch for any reaction." [\[4,p82\]](#)

In 1976 wildlife researcher Daniel Kelly gave evidence to a Congressional Testimony on trapping. His evidence is heart breaking to read and reveals the true callousness of trapping. Kelly reported on the death of a coyote that had both front legs caught in traps and was "exhausted after four days of fighting the unyielding steel ... The trapper approached, a five-foot birch club in hand. The coyote struggled frantically against the traps, pulling one leg loose and leaving the lifeless paw in the trap. The trapper poked at the coyote.

... Suddenly the club smashed across the coyote's nose and slammed him to the ground. But the blow was not delivered with precision. Almost instantly he was in a semi-crouch; blood spurting from the nose, eyes dazed. Again the club fell. The trapper ... grabbed the stunned coyote by the hind legs, stretching the animal full length while planting his foot heavily on its neck. The other foot delivered a series of thumping blows to the coyote's chest expelling hollow gasps of air. ... The coyote's eyes bulged, the mouth gaped, the tongue hung listlessly along the blood-stained jaw. Periodically stomping near the heart the trapper maintained this position for 14 minutes. ... There was no emotion involved, only a degree of disgust when the blow fell short or a brief expression of satisfaction when the blow was effective ... While focussing the camera, I thought how ridiculous it was for a 200-pound man to be stomping on an 18-pound coyote as if his very existence depended on the animal's elimination. The coyote, had he been given the opportunity, would not have even sought revenge. He would only have tried to escape."

"You had a club and bashed the animal's head. It's cruel, it's horrible. People think it's romantic, but it's not. If people who wear fur coats ever saw their dog in a trap like that, they'd never wear fur again."

Raven Wilson, native Canadian and former trapper.

Drowning Sets

Some leghold traps are set so as to kill rather than restrain the animal. 'Drown sets' are set along the water's edge to trap aquatic or semi-aquatic species such as beavers, mink and muskrats.

"When a muskrat is caught by a leghold trap, the first thing it tries to do is swim to safety. Unable to escape, it will return to shore and chew off its leg. To prevent this, trappers designed a special set with either a stick or wires that permit the muskrat to swim away from shore, but not come back. Hence, the muskrat flounders about on the surface until exhaustion and the weight of the trap overcome it – and then it drowns. ... Drowning an animal by clamping a steel trap to its leg is anything but humane." [\[4, p21\]](#).

Animals for which these traps are designed are used to the aquatic environment and so are able to breathe for varying periods, so death can take a long time. When caught in these traps, mink struggle under water for up to 4 minutes, muskrats for up to 4 minutes 19 seconds, and beavers for up to 12 minutes 40 seconds (although they have survived for twice this in some studies) [\[5\]](#). Even trapping journals admit that "bone breakage occurs in approximately 50% of the tested animals" (tested on submerged beavers) [\[1, p14\]](#).

Conibear Traps

This trap, invented by Frank Conibear, came onto the market in 1958, designed as an 'instant-kill' trap. It is essentially a vertical 'break-back' trap, a wire spring trap that is supposed to break the neck. The major problem, as with other traps, is

that they are indiscriminate. The trap may do its job on the animal it's designed for, but the wrong sized animal or the wrong species, can suffer immensely. All too often the victim is left with its body crushed between strong wire jaws awaiting one of the fates described above. In a 1975 interview Conibear admitted his trap's failings: "As it is, the small trap is still not good enough. It doesn't always kill instantly. You'd think it would, but there are so many sizes of animals – from the few ounces of the weasel to the 60 pounds of the beaver – that the small type can't handle them all. Conversely, if you get a small beaver in the large trap, it will be caught in the hips rather than by the neck and will suffer a lingering death." (1, p15)

Laboratory trials conducted by the British Columbia Research Council demolish the myth of the instant kill – it took up to 3 minutes to kill 90% of the animals. Other studies show a mink caught across the neck "very alert, active biting metal" two minutes after the trap sprang shut; another, caught behind the front legs and between chest and abdomen was "conscious, aware and alert" before being euthanised at 3 minutes. A racoon was observed screaming at 1 minute, and was still showing a heart beat and having convulsions at 4 minutes 30 seconds. (5).

Off Target

The cruelty to trapped animals is bad enough, but the traps also kill animals that are not required by the trapper. These so-called 'trash' include wildlife and pets unfortunate enough to stumble across these horrific devices.

"Trapping is too indiscriminate to assure a legal furbearer will be the catch on the following morning. Whatever animal is attracted to the bait first, or whichever species walks down the trail first, will be the one that gets caught first." Thomas Eveland, 'Jaws of Steel', p89.

There are numerous accounts of pet animals caught in traps, and although the fur trade recognises the problem these traps are still legal in many countries:

"A major problem in that respect is that, unlike the vast uninhabited expanses in which most Canadian and Russian trappers operate, the proximity of trapping grounds in the US to populated areas raise the threat to children and domestic animals." 'Fur World', 22.12.97

In the US the Denver Wildlife Research Centre conducted a trapping study on coyotes, trapping them in a particular area at 10-year intervals over a 30-year period. Some of the government's 'best' trappers were used. 1,199 animals were caught. Just 138 of these were coyotes – that's a 'success' rate of just 11.5%. 1,061 animals were non-target, including golden eagles, antelope and domestic livestock. 30 sheep were amongst those caught – the very animal the study was designed to protect. (4, p71)

A former government-employed trapper Dick Randall told the 1976 Congressional Hearings: "Even though I was an experienced, professional trapper, my trap victims included non-target species such as bald-eagles and golden eagles, a variety of hawks and other birds, rabbits, sage grouse, pet dogs, deer, antelope, porcupines, sheep and calves.

The leghold trap is inherently non-selective. It is probably the most cruel device ever invented by man. My trapping records show that for each target animal I trapped, about two unwanted individuals were caught. Because of trap injuries, these non-target species had to be destroyed."

It is said that non-target kills can range from 2 to 10 times higher than target kills. So, if target kills are 30,000 muskrats, non-target kills will be between 60-30,000 annually. As such, the area will lose between 90,000 and 330,000 wildlife individuals. (4, p93) American group Friends of Animals compiled a list of animals it takes to make a fur coat, including the number of 'trash' animals per coat and total hours spent in a trap. A coat made of wild mink fur equates to 60 mink, 180 'trash' animals and 3,600 hours spent in traps.

But trappers are indifferent to the lives of animals and their attitude to 'non-target' species is summed up by a quote from a trapping magazine: "When non-target animals are numerous, there is sometimes nothing you can do but put in additional sets

[traps] and thin them down.” (6).

Trapping and Endangered Species

The direct threat to endangered species through trapping is detailed above. In addition to this there are other effects. The recorded figures concerning accidental trapping of endangered species are lower than the real numbers due to many incidents going unreported. For example, an 8-year study from a raptor research and rehabilitation program reported that 21% of all eagle admissions were caught in leghold traps, 64% of them sustaining injuries that were eventually fatal (4, p71). But many trappers were unaware of the centre’s existence so didn’t take trapped raptors there, whilst others are afraid of reporting injuries to endangered species for fear of prosecution (4, p80).

Trapping removes large numbers of a species over a short period of time. Removing, say, 25,000 muskrats removes an important food source, resulting in predators putting pressure on other species that may not be able to cope. Most losses will come at the worst time – late autumn and early winter. Some individual predators may suffer malnutrition or starvation as a result, or fail to breed normally.

References

1. ‘Trapping Animals for Fur’. A Tyler and WJ Jordan. Care for the Wild, 1994
2. PETA factsheet, Trapping: Pain for Profit
3. CAFT-US website
4. ‘Jaws of Steel’. Thomas Eveland, The Fund for Animals, 1991
5. LYNX supplement ‘trapping’
6. Respect for Animals newsletter summer 1997

Wording of petition

To: His Excellency, Sir Philip Bailhache, Bailiff and the Members of the States of Jersey

The humble petition of Carol Hansford – Carol’s Dolphin Project, Bridget Murphy – Jersey Animal Rights Association, Sue Daly – Marine life in the Channel Islands, Rose Loane – The Quality of Life Animal Sanctuary, Soraya Zadal – For the Animals

We the undersigned, residents of and visitors to the Island of Jersey, hereby call upon the above mentioned persons to empower an immediate and total ban on the importation and sale of fur and fur trimmed products in the Channel Islands. Animals which are bred for the fur trade are kept in horrific conditions and are killed inhumanely by the cheapest means possible, which results in a number of animals literally being skinned alive. Please implement a total ban of these products.

NAME OF PETITIONER	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE OR MARK

2,505 signatures