

Wildlife species in the European fur sector

Trapping is a legitimate activity with a fundamental role in the sustainable conservation of wildlife and the management of natural resources at large. At the same time, the welfare of wild animals has to be protected at the time of their trapping, to avoid unnecessary suffering, pain and stress.

Humane trapping. International legislative instruments were already put in place in order to protect the welfare of wild animals at the time of their capture. The European Union adopted already in 1991 the Council regulation (EEC) 3254/91. The regulation prohibits the use of leghold traps in the Union and introduces a ban on the access of pelts of certain animal species¹ and their derivate goods – covering several headings from Chapters 41-43 of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System – from third countries which do not have adequate administrative/legislative provisions prohibiting the use of leghold trap or where trapping methods do not meet internationally agreed humane trapping standards.

Moreover, the regulation is complemented by the Commission Decision 98/596/EC. This Decision provides for an additional layer of detail by listing those countries from which specific animal pelts and manufactured goods can be imported.

Additionally, the European Union concluded in 1997 the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS) together with the Russian Federation and Canada,² and signed a similar agreement with the United States the year after. The AIHTS establishes international harmonised technical standards for humane trapping providing a sufficient level of protection to the welfare of animals that are trapped for wildlife management, fur, skin or meat production, or for conservation of mammals. Through the AIHTS, the parties agreed to establish appropriate process to certify traps in accordance with the standards; to monitor and ensure that the trapping methods used on their territories fulfils the standards; actively prohibits the use of non-certified traps; and finally it requires manufacturers to identify certified traps and provide instructions for their use and maintenance.

Endangered species. Finally, the trade of endangered species is regulated at international level by the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild fauna and flora CITES, of which the United Kingdom is a Contracting party. By regulating the international trade in specimens at sustainable levels, CITES is a key international tool in the global conservation agenda. CITES is directly transposed into EU legislation by the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations: Council Regulation (EC) No. 338/97 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein; and Commission Regulation (EC) No. 865/2006 detailing the implementation of the former; and other implementing regulations³.

¹ Beaver (*Castor Canadensis*), Otter (*Lutra canadensis*), Coyote (*Canis latrans*), Wolf (*Canis lupus*), Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Bobcat (*Felis rufus*), Sable (*Martes zibellina*), Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), Musk rat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), Fisher (*Martes pennanti*), Badger (*Taxidea taxus*), Marten (*Martes americana*), Ermine (*Mustela erminea*).

² The AIHTS entered into force in July 2008, after the ratification process was concluded in the Russian Federation. The EU had already ratified the Agreement in 1998, followed by Canada in 1999.

³ Commission Regulation (EU) No 791/2012 laying down detailed rules concerning the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 792/2012 laying down rules for the design of permits, certificates and other documents provided for in

CITES already provides for an extensive coverage of endangered species, through three different lists: appendix I covering species threatened with extinction; appendix II covering species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival; and appendix III covering species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

According to CITES, listed specimens can only be traded from and to a Contracting Party only if accompanied by appropriate CITES documentation for custom clearance.

Conclusions

Fur Europe supports sustainable and humane trapping methods based on these international standards and rules, and developed from objective and science-based data. Seemingly, we support sustainable trade in fur-bearing species in line with the global conservation agenda.

It is important that the EU and its Member States acknowledge that sustainable and humane trapping is a legitimate and necessary activity to protect biodiversity and the environment. A ban on the import of pelts and products derived from certain species as well as other kinds of unreasonable restrictions to legitimate and widespread activities would not bring any added value in the field of animal welfare and nature management. On the contrary, legal and administrative rules should be better enforced and be updated based on the best and latest available science. In this perspective governments should:

- a) Encourage research on animal welfare and on the establishment of appropriate technical solutions that meet the international accepted standards; and
- b) Train the national and regional competent authorities with regard to the applicable rules and regulations. The European fur industry wishes to reaffirms its full availability to support governmental actions in these two fields.

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ABOUT FUR EUROPE

Fur Europe represents the entire value chain of the European fur sector including farmers, feed kitchens, auction houses, fur brokers, manufacturing, marketing and fur retailers. A Brussels-based umbrella organisation we represent national associations in 28 European countries.

We exist by the values of openness, transparency and reliability and from this fundament we develop our policies under six sustainability pillars: animal welfare, biodiversity, by-products, environmental footprint, skills and transparency.

Fur Europe was founded in 2014, as a result of a merger between the European Fur Breeders' Association and the European members of the International Fur Federation.

Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97. In addition, Commission Recommendation No 2007/425/EC identifies a set of actions for the enforcement of Regulation (EC) No 338/97, also known as the 'EU Enforcement Action Plan'.