

## Position Paper on Animal Welfare

It is one of the fur sector's most important goals to assure high a level of animal welfare standards and the further development of these standards. Independent scientific research is continuously bringing new data and we want our standards to keep pace with this progress.

As we recognized the importance of independent scientific research, in 2009 Fur Europe has established a scientific project on animal welfare assessment of mink and foxes called WelFur, currently being in the implementation phase. The project is the outcome of the research of seven European universities and its aim was to create science-based indicators for the animal welfare assessment. WelFur is largely inspired by the Welfare Quality® project that the European Commission initiated in 2004, covering pigs, poultry and dairy cattle. It relies on a sequential evaluation process, in which measures (22 or 23 indicators, for mink and fox respectively) are collected on farms to assess the compliance of the farm with 12 criteria; then these criteria are aggregated into 4 main welfare principles, and finally an overall welfare classification is produced.

The assessment protocol is based on both science and commercial farm tests. All welfare measures developed in the WelFur protocols were tested on farms and found applicable. The farmers are assessed according to four principles (good health, good feeding, good housing, and appropriate behaviour) and receive a score from 0 to 100 to have their farming standards evaluated. You can find more on WelFur on following website: [www.welfur.eu](http://www.welfur.eu).

In the near future, there will be two EU laws relevant for animal welfare which we will focus on: the Animal Health Law and the Animal Welfare Framework Law, both of them aimed to unify the so far very fragmented legislation. The latter is very important for the fur sector in light of our commitment to improve welfare of farming animals. Via the following link, you can find the Commission's roadmap on the Animal Welfare Framework Law:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/actionplan/actionplan\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/actionplan/actionplan_en.htm)

The Commission states in its roadmap that there is a need for a common methodology to assess compliance for qualitative requirements, leaving a wide range of interpretations to national and regional authorities. Most of the animal welfare legislation is made under the form of directives. Therefore national animal welfare rules are not subject to the same level of harmonization than other veterinary rules. The differences in Members States in perception of Animal Welfare are noticeable; the regulatory heterogeneity is creating an unequal regulatory framework affecting the competitiveness of farmers in some sectors.

Therefore, Fur Europe would like to see the area of the legislation on animal welfare harmonized on EU level. Plus, we strongly support the demand of science-based indicators and will take an action in putting forward our WelFur program to be applied on European level.