

Investigation Report **JANUARY 2017**

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LUXURY AS SEEN BY MINKS

A NEW INVESTIGATION
BY ONE VOICE



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INTRODUCTION

One Voice's investigation took place in 6 French mink farms supplying to the fur industry. The filmed images were gathered thanks to people who had access to the facilities.

In these sordid premises, where the animals are stacked up in cages, we found a total disregard, not only for their well-being but also for the environment.

If fur represents luxury, here is the view from the other side.

*"The objectives of our farms are **the protection of wild species** in producing quality furs, using farming methods which guarantee the **well-being** of the animals."*

<http://www.vison-france.com>



I - IN EACH CAGE, THE SAME TORMENT



« Dans les élevages,
la vie est créée
qui doit se passer dans
le bien-être avant
un sacrifice indolore. »

www.ffmfourrure.org

THE ANIMAL'S LIVING CONDITIONS

Dilapidated infrastructures

The buildings in several farms demonstrated huge shortfalls in their upkeep, especially in two sites, one of which was particularly dilapidated. The cages where the minks were detained were dirty. Hair and dust had built up everywhere.

There were also food remains rotting on the tops of the cages, and excrements heaping up below. In one farm in particular, so much excrement had accumulated that it reached the same height as the cages... The minks are forced to live in very worrying hygiene conditions.



*"All of the prophylactic measures are observed: quarantine, **periodic removal of manure or excrement**, elimination of sources of parasites or infections, **cleaning, disinfection**, anti-parasite treatment, vaccinations."*

www.vison-france.com

Living on the cage floor

The excrement accumulates in this way due to the peculiar design of the cages... The floor is in fact completely constituted of cage bars, except in the nest, a 'box' at the end of the cage with a bar ceiling. The excrement is directly evacuated through the bars. The same applies to their food, a meaty shapeless porridge, which is deposited on the top of their cage, where the remains, evidently, can remain there to rot for some time. Nothing more appetising for a predator designed to spend its days hunting and fishing for its dinner...



*"The alimentary needs of the animals are covered by distribution in sufficient quantities and in adequate intervals of **healthy appetising balanced food**, of which the elements are adapted to the digestion of the species."*

www.vison-france.com



*"The animals are accommodated in cages or runs offering sufficient space to **move and relax**. A shelter is attached to these cages for resting, which protects them from bad weather, extreme temperatures and external events; the animals have a toilet area which allows for the constant disposal of their faeces."*

www.vison-france.com

Piled up or isolated

The mink is a solitary and territorial animal. At two months of age, the babies leave their mother. But in the farms, it is not unusual to see several individuals sharing a cage, where they survive as best they can. The investigation reveals many demonstrations of intense stress and stereotypical behaviour. They have nowhere to escape in conflict situations, shut up in such a tiny space together. Sometimes they are alone in the cages, but piled up one on top of the other...



*"If several individuals are homed together in the same unit, the population is not only kept within the levels of **comfortable density**, but we also make sure that they mutually accept one another."*

www.vison-france.com

No stimulation

The minks are obliged to live either together, or isolated in juxtaposed cages, where they suffer from the inability to express their natural behaviours. A species which needs to live in a semi-aquatic environment, spending its long days looking for food, should not be contained in these farms. There is no water to dive into, no space to walk around, no environment to explore, no trunks to hide in. Minks, who in the wild can have several hiding places and a living space of up to three kilometres of watercourse, have no enrichment in these farms. Some of them become

withdrawn, exhibiting stereotypical forward and backwards displacement behaviours, repeating the same movements of their paws and their head to fill the time.



HANDLING

The investigation shows the minks being taken before they are exterminated. A man grabs the animals roughly before brutally throwing them in the container of his vehicle one after the other. Obviously, there are blunders... And when a mink falls off the side or tries to escape, it's sometimes the dog that catches it, shaking it like a doll before it is retrieved (but in what condition?).

*"The animals are handled without any other inconvenient for them other than the constraint of being restrained, which **eliminates any traumatic action.**"*

www.vison-france.com



DEATH

In the end, they all perish. They are supposedly suffocated with carbon monoxide gas which is released into the container. The method is presumed to be painless, but the minks are

nevertheless stressed, piled up on top of each other and held in an anxiety generating situation! The images published by PETA in January 2016 indicate that the gas is not always used effectively. Death by asphyxiation is 'successful' in very relative terms (some survive the first session).



*"The sacrifice of the animals only happens when it is necessary – harvesting the fur, eliminating subjects with incurable illnesses – and in **such a way that the death is immediate.** If that is not possible, the animal is made unconscious, **without suffering**, until death comes. This sacrifice is conducted with **all of the respect** necessary towards an animal."*

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II- MINK FARMING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DIRECT POLLUTION AND HEALTH RISKS: EFFLUENT AND CORPSES

Mink farming, like other industrial farming methods, has environmental consequences – not only in energy consumption and VOC emissions (Volatile Organic Compounds) but also in the use of heavy metals to treat the furs. In the case of certain farms, the investigation shows that the pollution goes even further than that.

Firstly there is undrained effluent; faeces and urine which run directly onto the ground, accumulating and running off with rainwater. As well as the remains of the meat-based food left to rot... even on empty cages, some of which have not been used for some time. There is also the treatment of corpses. In one of the farms, we even saw one on the ground, in the grass... Other than the obvious health risk this poses, pollution of the water table seems highly likely.





CONSEQUENCES ON THE FAUNA

The escape of confined minks from mink farms is not a myth. The investigation shows two minks who were caught and attacked by a dog, but how many manage to actually escape? In many areas in France, populations are established, notably in Brittany, where historically there were many farms.

Of course, for these individuals who have managed to escape a terrible fate, finding freedom is a chance. But for the environment; much less so. Firstly because they compete with

their smaller cousins, the European minks, who already struggle to survive in the South-West, and secondly because any introduction of a new species into an eco-system where it didn't exist before can damage its long term balance and can have multiple dramatic consequences, such as the extinction of other animals.

Ethical regulatory plans exist, which include sterilising and releasing the minks. However, whilst the farms exist, there will be runaways which influence the wild population, or even create new ones. Certain active farms can be found less than 20 kilometres from natural protected zones!

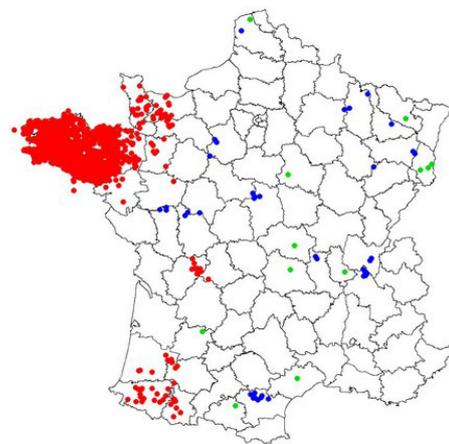


inpn.mnhn.fr

Map showing the distribution of minks in France*

- Definite presence
- Likely presence
- Likely or certain absence

* From the programme: Regional Atlas of Biodiversity and Marine Sectors



droitnature.free.fr

Observations of American minks in France collected between 1990 and 1999:

- Associated with the existence of feral populations
- Animals escaped from farms who have not founded feral populations
- Non-explained observations



*"The farming is practised in such a way as to **avoid the escape** of domesticated animals and to prevent access to stray animals and to non-authorized people."*

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CONCLUSION

No animal is designed to cope with confinement. The return to freedom for minks born in mink farms shows how far captivity is removed from nature. Their stereotypical displacement behaviours are a glaring symptom of their torment, which is undeniable. To be born captive doesn't reduce the pain. Being born captive does not mean belonging to humans. Being born captive does not mean to have no right to any respect. The minks imprisoned in farms have no respite from the treatment that is inflicted upon them. From their birth, they are squashed into uncomfortable cages until the day that they

are brutally removed to be asphyxiated and butchered. The luxury industry has a terrible hidden side, that of the nightmare of living beings exploited because of their appearance. An exploitation which does not take the environment into account...

One Voice is asking
for mink farms in France
to be banned.



"For the more than one hundred generations that they have been raised, farmed minks are domestic animals. They don't have the concept of 'liberty'."

www.ffmfourrure.org



The images (videos and photos) are available
on the site www.VisonsLeRespect.fr,
with all of the details of the initiatives
undertaken by One Voice.

You too can act!



Find all of our studies, investigations
and scientific expertise on
www.one-voice.fr

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