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Animal Welfare and U.S. Mink Farms

In 1985, the Fur Farm Animal Welfare Coalition published the nation's first set of Humane Care Operating Guidelines for the benefit of domestic mink producers in the United States. Developed by farmers, veterinarians, animal scientists and welfare experts, they were one of the first codified set of animal care standards in all US animal agriculture.

They were designed to assist farmers in creating and assuring a humane environment for the animals under their care. By 1990, more than 95% of American mink production came from farms which met these standards and passed inspection by an independent veterinarian.

In 1994, mink farming leaders undertook a comprehensive update and revision of the industry's humane care guidelines. Since then, the Guidelines have been modified and updated numerous times, and it is a document that is continuously under review.

The most current edition was completed in 2019 and reflects the most recent scientific thought on animal care and welfare. They have been peer reviewed by the [Professional Animal Auditors Certification Organization's](#) (PAACO) Animal Welfare Committee; an international team of animal welfare experts lead by Dr. Cassandra Tucker from UC Davis School of Animal Science. [The Standard Guidelines for the Operation of Mink Farms in the United States](#) (SGOM) reflect some of the highest farm animal welfare and humane care protocols in the world.

Consisting of over 130 pages in three booklets, the SGOM cover's farm management, housing, pen sizes & densities, nutrition, Veterinary care, handling, employee training, biosecurity, animal enrichments, behavior, manure and environmental management, and euthanasia. There are also strict record keeping requirements.

Farms are inspected during different production phases of the year (Conditioning, Reproductive, Growth/Furring), by trained, 3rd party professional auditors from [Validus Verification Services](#). The Audit Instrument itself contains 128 criteria that must be observed and measured.

The SGOM comply with all internationally recognized animal welfare criteria, and qualify all mink raised under the Standard Guidelines for the Operation of Mink Farms in the United States to receive the FurMark® label. [FurMark®](#) is a global certification program developed by the International Fur Federation, and constitutes a world-class, comprehensive certification and traceability program that covers all aspects of the fur chain, from trapping/farming, dressing, manufacturing, to sales. In order to be FurMark® certified, farm management standards are required to meet recognized country regulations including: Truthfulness, Transparency, Improvement and Rigor; programs must be science based, peer-reviewed by independent experts, and publicly available; and verification systems must be impartial and conducted by qualified third parties.

Humane care of their animals is the American mink farmer's number one priority. Not only is it necessary to produce the finest mink in the world; it is a moral obligation. US producers earn the top 5%-10% in world prices because of the quality of their product, and that quality is a direct result of the quality of care the mink receive on the farm.