



Fur Commission USA

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My name is Challis Hobbs, and I am the Executive Director of Fur Commission USA, a national non-profit association representing U.S. mink farmers. Most of the mink farms in operation today in the U.S. are third and fourth-generation family farms. Mink ranchers recognize their responsibility to preserve and protect the land on which they work and provide the highest quality care for their livestock. I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 3390 that aims to prohibit the sale, offer for sale, or trade of fur products in the State of Oregon. I have extensive personal and professional experience in the fur farming industry, having worked with fur farmers on the fur farming certification program, visited almost every fur farm in the U.S., grown up in a farming community, and worked for the largest global fur auction house in the world for four years.

The justification for House Bill 3390 is based on flawed information regarding animal welfare and human health risks. Mink farms are held to animal welfare standards just like the swine, beef, and poultry industries, resulting in similar animal welfare situations as those other animal agriculture industries. The fur farming certification program is peer reviewed and accredited by the Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization (PAACO), which also peer-reviews the farming standards and certification programs for other major animal agriculture industries in the U.S., such as swine, beef, and poultry. The mink farming certification protocols were developed with input from scientists, veterinarians, and animal welfare experts, with rigorous standards for nutrition, housing, biosecurity, veterinary care, and humane harvesting to ensure the well-being of their animals. Mink farms are independently inspected by Validus Verification Services for compliance. Mink farming is also subject to state, federal, and local laws, including environmental regulations.

Moreover, mink are euthanized using approved methods from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), which is required in their certification. All mink in the U.S. are euthanized using cooled filtered carbon monoxide. After harvest, the mink pelts are sold on the market and the remaining animal matter is used in various products, such as organic compost, artisanal pet food, crab bait, and medical research. Nothing is wasted.

The bill also suggests that by banning the retail sale of fur, it will reduce human health risks, implying that farmed mink are a threat to human health. This notion is unfounded as the U.S. mink farming industry, in conjunction with governmental health agencies, has taken action to protect against SARS-CoV-2, including vaccination of the mink population and implementation of strict biosecurity protocols. These efforts have been successful in preventing significant outbreaks of the virus on mink farms. The USDA has stated that there is no significant threat to the public from farmed mink, and the U.S. mink farming industry is collaborating with the USDA/APHIS on a mink farm SARS-CoV-2 surveillance program. This ongoing program has been in place since the summer of last year, further ensuring the safety of both mink and humans.



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Mink farms also contribute positively to the environment by serving as a way for animal agriculture processors to convert byproducts into revenue and decrease waste in landfills. Across the United States, mink farms consume over 300 million pounds of byproducts (such as dairy, poultry, eggs, beef, and fish) as feed each year. Without mink farms, these byproducts would likely be sent to landfills, resulting in additional expenses for producers and communities. Mink fur is often considered a sustainable product because it is durable, biodegradable, and can last for many years. In contrast, synthetic fibers, which are made from chemicals and do not occur naturally, are not biodegradable and can take hundreds of years to break down in landfills. Synthetic fibers also contribute to microfiber pollution and are produced using non-renewable resources, such as petroleum. Choosing natural fibers like mink fur may be a more sustainable option compared to synthetic fibers.

It is important to recognize the hypocrisy in supporting the sale of plant-based fibers while condemning the use of animal-based fibers like fur. Both types of clothing production result in the death of animals. In the U.S., approximately 1.5 million mink are harvested each year for their pelts to be turned into clothing, while the remains are used in pet foods, crab bait, compost, and medical research. In contrast, plant-based materials like cotton require tilling and plowing the ground, which kills millions of animals each year for the purpose to be fertilizer.

In conclusion, House Bill 3390 is based on misinformation about animal welfare, the role of mink farming in public health, and the environment. The animal welfare claims in the bill are not supported by facts. Moreover, this bill infringes upon the freedom of consumers to make their own educated choices regarding the use of animal products, including fur. The bill's author and supporters seek to impose their preferences on the general public, effectively taking away the right to choose from Oregonians. We must respect individual choice and allow consumers to make their own decisions based on accurate information and scientific evidence.

I respectfully urge the committee members to oppose House Bill 3390, consider the facts, and respect the preferences of other people.

Sincerely,

Challis Hobbs
Executive Director
Fur Commission USA