

- Animals farmed for their fur, such as foxes, mink and raccoon dogs are active, wide-roaming predators with complex biological needs. WelFur is an industry-led voluntary welfare certificate for fur farms that requires lower standards than the law in some EU countries.
- The intensive cage system on fur farms in the European Union has remained largely unchanged over the years. WelFur, which is designed around the current housing systems and current minimum level of European Union legislation, does not offer satisfactory or reliable solutions to the grave inherent problems of standard fur farming practices.
- The WelFur criteria do not require access to water for mink or sites for digging for foxes. As the ability to search for food in water (mink) and to dig (fox) are to be considered as natural behaviours and the motivation to carry out such behaviour probably is high, the WelFur criteria do not ensure that the species in question can realize their species-specific needs.
- The WelFur evaluation scheme combines different welfare measures into an overall score for a farm. This practice obscures individual measures and therefore allows serious welfare problems and injuries to be masked.
- The aim of the WelFur scoring system is to rank farms in relation to each other and to “current best practice”. The WelFur protocol does not assess animal welfare in relation to an “absolute” welfare level, nor is it assessing animal welfare on an individual animal level. It does not guarantee that individual animals do not suffer from poor welfare.
- Despite industry statements that assessments are undertaken by an independent third party, the Finnish Fur Breeders’ Association owns 38% of the stock of the company Luova which states it is in charge of auditing Finnish fur farms and several of its assessors also have ties to the fur industry.



Severely damaged fox in cage, Finland, 2019. Oikeutta Eläimille

- In sum, the Welfur certificate has clear weaknesses both in terms of measuring animal welfare as well as in terms of auditing practices and independence from the fur industry. Therefore, Welfur should not be used as a standard for animal welfare within the EU nor recommended or promoted in any way.
- Numerous investigations have shown that practices documented on EU fur farms do not meet the most basic animal welfare needs, nor the 1998 EU legislation relating to animals kept for farming purposes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **WE CALL ON:**

- European Union Member States, which still allow the farming of animals for their fur, to introduce legislation outlawing fur production at the earliest opportunity.
- The European Commission to act urgently to conduct audits to investigate the ample evidence of non-compliance with Directive 98/58/EC, taking into account the 1999 Council of Europe Recommendations, in all Member States where fur farming still occurs.
- EU and Member State policymakers to refrain from endorsing Welfur, or in any way integrating it into animal welfare policies.