

ANIMAL LIBERATION FRONT RAIDS CO. LAOIS FUR FARM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday 19th February 2002

In the early morning hours of Wednesday 19th February the Animal Liberation Front removed sections of a perimeter fence surrounding a mink farm based in Ballymanus, Stradbally, Co. Laois. Upon entering the premises we opened the cages of approximately 1000 animals, allowing them to disperse freely and safely along the route of the Grand Canal.

Our motivation was that of putting compassion over greed, of pity over barbarity and of freedom over exploitation. Fur farming has no place in any "progressive" society. Mink, who naturally roam up to 6 kilometers a day and spend 60% of their active time hunting and playing in water are confined to bare cages no longer than one's arm. They are known to defend their territory with radius of 6 kilometers, but on fur farms are forced to withstand the presence of up to 45,000 other mink in close proximity.

Steriotypies, acts of repetitive abnormal behaviour (such as constant pacing or circling of the cage, gnawing of bars, etc.) were of course prominent, although we witnessed a greater evidence of their suffering. Many animals bore self-inflicted flesh-wounds and mutilations to the extreme that some had actually chewed off their own tails*. Disease was rampant. A number of animals appeared to be missing large tufts of fur from their bodies*. Dead and rotting mink littered the compound* and piles of excrement lay beneath each cage* - hardly fitting for animals highly sensitive to the presence of others.

When their time comes the mink will be removed from their cages, thrown en masse into a gas chamber, suffocated and skinned. BOC Gases are the providers of the lethal carbon monoxide to this concentration camp.

No doubt there will be those who will criticise our action in the belief that the freed mink will destroy local wildlife populations, however we would not have taken such action were this to be true. Irish mink expert Chris Smal states "mink ultimately control their numbers... wherever mink establish themselves the numbers soon stabilize... Many of the prey species taken by the mink are well able to sustain the pressure that the new predator puts upon their populations... The mink takes its place alongside the country's native predators and does not merit its somewhat awesome bloodthirsty reputation".

While Europe is making animal welfare progress, Ireland stays behind. Austria, the UK, Scotland and Northern Ireland have already outlawed the practice of fur farming while Sweden, Switzerland and Italy have effectively banned it through tough preventative legislation and other countries (such as Holland, Germany and Norway) are now considering a total ban. Meanwhile the Irish government chooses to ignore such considerations. If the major centre and left parties of Holland, a country with 2.9 million mink on 208 farms, press for a complete ban (it has already banned fox and chinchilla farming), then Ireland with its 140,000 mink and 1,700 fox on 5 farms has no excuse that banning this cruelty would have anything more than negligible economic repercussions.

Currently no license is required for farming of fox in Ireland, while for mink the license agreement does not take animal welfare into issue. Indeed, the Irish government is actively supporting the practice by supplying yearly grants to many of Ireland's fur farms. When the rest of Europe prohibits fur farming, will Ireland be the only haven that allows it?

We have taken this action to highlight the government's inaction. Minister Joe Walsh is a puppet to agri-business - too cowardly and too biased to allow animal cruelty to be an issue when 64% of the population is opposed to the practice of fur farming+. We refuse to allow this to continue. This is the first animal liberation action against fur farming, but as long as fur farming remains legal we shall be here...

When darkness falls,
A.L.F.

* see evidence in pictures on accompanying compact disc
+ Irish Marketing Surveys Ltd