

# Briefing: The Fur (Import and Sale) Bill



## What does the bill do?

The Fur (Import and Sale) Bill is a Private Members' bill introduced by Ruth Jones MP on 16 October 2024 which would extend the existing bans on importing fur from cats, dogs and seals to include fur from foxes, raccoon dogs, mink, chinchilla and other animals killed for fur fashion. It would also ban the sale of fur products. The bill has its second reading on 13 June 2025.



Raccoon dog in a cage, Poland. Credit: Andrew Skowron/We Animals 2015

## Why should the government support this bill?

**Ending extreme forms of animal cruelty:** The bill would put an end to Britain's role in the extreme suffering endured by animals on fur farms. Every year, tens of millions of animals suffer and die in the global fur trade. The pain and distress inflicted on animals on fur farms is acute: animals including foxes and mink are kept their entire lives in small, barren cages, unable to exhibit normal patterns of behaviour, before being killed by gassing or anal electrocution. The animals live and die in these conditions solely so that their bodies can produce fashion products. This is contrary to the central principle of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which is to prevent unnecessary suffering to animals.

**Closing legal loopholes:** Over twenty years ago, the Fur Farming (Prohibition) Acts banned fur farming in the UK on public morality grounds. However, this legislation applies only to domestic production and not to imports. The Fur (Import and Sale) Bill would close this loophole, thereby preventing the offshoring of poor animal welfare practices.

**Honouring public morality:** National polling carried out in April 2022 revealed that 77% of British citizens think the government should ban the importation of animal products such as fur, where the production methods are already banned in the UK. This Bill would honour these beliefs and would ensure that Britain no longer participates in and/or promotes products produced in a manner contrary to the public's belief in the humane treatment of animals. The Bill would also further the principles of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022 – legislation which requires the government to have all due regard for the ways in which government policy, including trade policy, may affect the welfare of animals as sentient beings.

**Supporting public health:** The global fur trade presents a significant risk to public health. In a study published in Nature in September 2024, scientists studying animals farmed for their fur in China identified 39 viruses classed as "potentially high-risk" for transmission to humans, including 13 novel viruses and 11 zoonotic viruses which can be transmitted from animals to humans. By ensuring that Britain no longer supports a trade which elevates the risk of animal-to-human virus transmission, the Fur (Import and Sale) Bill is an important measure to safeguard public health.

## Legal background to bill

The World Trade Organisation's rules permit the UK to prohibit or otherwise restrict the importation of products where this is necessary to protect "public morals" under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Article XX(a). This includes measures to protect the public's belief in the humane treatment of animals, which is the basis for the UK's existing ban on the importation of cat, dog, and seal fur.

## How you can help

**With your help, we can end Britain's role in the suffering inflicted on millions of animals in the fur trade.**

We are asking supportive MPs and members of the public to let DEFRA's Secretary of State, Steve Reed, know that you would like to see the government formally back this bill. You can do so by sending an email directly to DEFRA at [defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk](mailto:defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk).



Mink in a cage, Finland. Credit: Oikeutta eläimille/We Animals 2023