THE WELFARE OF AMERICAN MINK, RED AND ARCTIC FOXES, RACCOON DOG AND CHINCHILLA KEPT FOR FUR PRODUCTION

Scientific Officer

Biological Hazards & Animal Health and Welfare Unit

EFSA

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

FUR ANIMALS AND BACKGROUND

American mink

Raccoon dog

Arctic fox

Red fox

Chinchilla

Technical Report

ToR1a

Update of SCAHAW (2001) literature review on **carnivore** (mink, foxes, and raccoon dog), and **rodent** (chinchilla) biology.

ToR1b

Review of the most common **husbandry system(s)** (including field-tested systems) and **rearing practices** for fur farmed animals.

Art. 31

Art. 29

ToR2a

Identify the most relevant welfare consequences (**WCs**) and corresponding hazards in relation to common husbandry systems and practices for fur production.

ToR2b

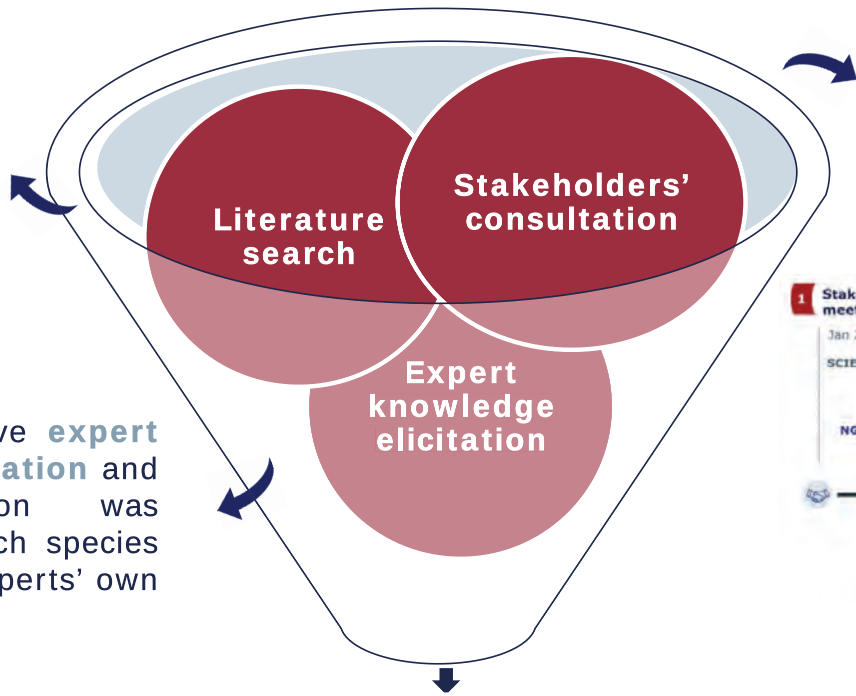
For the 5 most relevant WCs assess whether they can be **prevented** or **substantially mitigated** under current farming conditions or field-tested farming systems.

Scientific Opinion

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Three main approaches were used to answer sub-questions:

Identified **publications** with relevant welfare information for fur animals.



WELFARE ASSESSMENT

A semi-quantitative **expert knowledge elicitation** and group discussion was carried out in each species based on EFSA experts' own knowledge.

Information obtained through the four **calls for evidence** was revised by EFSA's experts and staff.

INTERPRETATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCES

Definitions

Current system

The cage system and dimensions described in the Technical Report, based on information from the four calls for evidence and literature on husbandry systems and farm practices for animals kept for fur

Enclosure

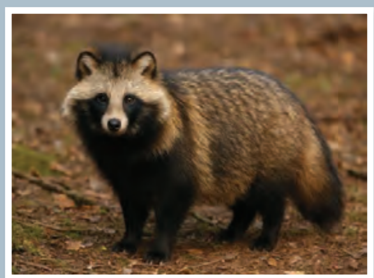
Any other type of husbandry system for keeping fur animals not currently in use in the field

©Stanisław Łapiński

REQUEST FROM THE MANDATE

Technical Report (context and description)

Biology



©AI-generated image

+

Production cycle and farm practices

+

Current housing systems

©KsiegarniaRolnicza.pl

Scientific opinion (welfare assessment)

Identification of the **scenarios**

Selection of 5 **welfare consequences**

Discussion on the **hazards**

Identification of preventive and **substantial mitigating measures**

Sources of uncertainty

Conclusions

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Definitions

PREVENTIVE MEASURES	Those that can be put in place to fully **prevent** the occurring of a specific welfare consequence by preventing the hazards
MITIGATING MEASURES	Those that can **mitigate** (i.e., reduce) the WC if the hazard is still present. **Substantial mitigation:** a mitigating measure or a combination of them, that acts together to markedly reduce the risk of experiencing or reducing the severity of adverse effects associated with a specific welfare consequence, within the relevant animal population. **Limited mitigation:** a measure or a group of them, not considered 'substantial' in relation to a specific welfare consequence.

MOST RELEVANT WELFARE CONSEQUENCES

Restriction of movement

Inability to perform exploratory or foraging behaviour

Sensorial under and/or overstimulation

Handling stress

Locomotory disorders including lameness

Soft tissue lesions and integument damage

Group stress

Isolation stress

Inability to perform comfort behaviour

Predation stress

Resting problems

What are the main welfare consequences?

- **Not enough room for the animals to move freely**
- **Little chance to do what they would normally do,** like explore, dig, chew or search for food
- **Either too little or too much sensory stimulation**

©Jens Malmkvist

©Stanisław Łapiński

©Tomasz Zoń

RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT

It applies to all species and animal categories

Insufficient:

- Floor area
- Cage height
- Structural complexity

Inadequate:

- Floor material

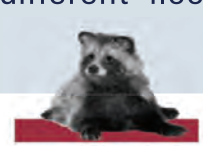
Limit the quantity and type of movements that animals need to perform, and the type of additional resources that can be added in the system

Preventive and mitigating measures

WC **cannot be prevented** or substantially mitigated in the current system, only **limited** mitigation

Substantial mitigation would require the following changes from current system:

Considerable increase of floor area to allow sustained locomotion	Addition of species-specific enrichment and functional areas	Addition of adequate-height platforms to allow full standing, vigilance behaviour and group resting
Possibility to choose among different floor types	All-year presence of adequate-size nests	



INABILITY TO PERFORM EXPLORATORY OR FORAGING BEHAVIOUR

ALL It applies to all species and animal categories

- **Limited cage size** and lack of physical complexity
- **Lack of enrichment** and inadequate feed texture and delivery
- Feed restriction/**inappropriate dietary** requirements

Preventive and mitigating measures

WC **cannot be prevented** or substantially mitigated in the current system.

Limited mitigation in the current system concern:

Changing feed texture, feed delivery, and good nutritional and hygienic quality of feed	Provide enriching, chewable resources

Substantial mitigation would require the following changes from current system:

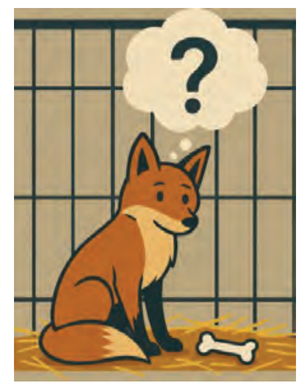
Considerable increase of space to allow provision of complex resources	Addition of species-specific enrichment and functional areas	Changing feed texture, delivery and feeding management

CONCLUSIONS – KEY MESSAGES

Across the species studied, **limited** improvements in animal welfare can be achieved in the **current system**

To **substantially mitigate** WCs, the current cage system needs to be changed to enclosures that offer **more space** and **stimulating environments**

The lack of information on alternative farming systems raise the need for further research on the quantitative aspects of **enclosures** required to substantially mitigate the WCs



©AI-generated image

STAY CONNECTED

SUBSCRIBE TO
efsa.europa.eu/en/news/newsletters
efsa.europa.eu/en/rss
Careers.efsa.europa.eu – job alerts

LISTEN TO OUR PODCAST
Science on the Menu –Spotify, Apple Podcast and YouTube

FOLLOW US ON BLUESKY
@efsa.bsky.social
@efsa-animals.bsky.social @efsa-plants.bsky.social

FOLLOW US ON LINKEDIN
Linkedin.com/company/efsa

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM
@onehealth_eu

CONTACT US
efsa.europa.eu/en/contact/askefsa

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY