



Canada Mink Breeders Association
Association des éleveurs de vison du Canada



March 19, 2021

Bill C-205 – Act to Amend the Health of Animals Act to Protect Biosecurity on Farms

Mr. Chairman and honourable members,

The Canada Mink Breeders Association (CMBA) welcomes the opportunity to present its perspectives on Bill C-205, An Act to Amend the Health of Animals Act.

Over four hundred years old, the fur trade is part of Canada's resource-based economy and one of Canada's oldest and most historically significant industries. The modern Canadian fur trade is centered on principles of sustainability and responsibility, contributing in substantial ways to Canada's economy and ecology. The fur trade supports livelihoods and cultures in rural and remote regions where employment can be hard to find. Many indigenous communities rely on the fur trade.

The value of fur exports ranges from \$500 million to \$800 million per year.

The Canadian mink sector is represented by 60 farms across Canada producing approximately 900,000 pelts.

It is our sector that consumes the waste stream from the food processors as well as fish and livestock facilities. In fact, mink farms utilize 100 million pounds of waste products annually, which would otherwise have to be discarded in landfills or disposed of in another manner.

The mink industry is responsible and highly regulated, with animal welfare and sustainability as two of its core values. Canadian mink farms are governed by the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farmed Mink. Through the Mink Care Assessment Program (MCAP) Canadian mink producers demonstrate responsible stewardship of their animals and the environment. Under this program producers are audited by a third party to ensure compliance with the Code.

The Code was developed under the auspices of the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) in conjunction with animal welfare authorities, researchers, veterinarians, government and producers. NFACC upholds a credible, science-based approach for the development, update, and maintenance of the Code of Practices for the care and handling of farmed animals, along with a standard, credible approach for the development of animal care assessment programs. This provides a comprehensive and transparent approach to animal welfare in the Canadian mink industry.

Canadian mink producers follow biosecurity standards developed under the guidance of the Canada Food Inspection Agency. This was a collaborative project involving federal and provincial governments, producers, researchers and veterinarians. Producers work hard to follow these standards to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their animals.



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Mink farms restrict human access to their animals to minimize the potential for introducing diseases. Diseases and pests pose a significant biosecurity threat to the animals. Farm staff wear dedicated clothing and footwear while on the farm.

Breaches of farm biosecurity protocols put our animals at risk, threaten their health and could devastate our industry.

The Canadian mink industry has and continues to face challenges from animal extremists and anti-agriculture groups. We are not alone in these challenges as other agricultural commodities are experiencing similar attacks.

The Canadian mink industry has experienced first hand the devastating consequences of breaches in farm biosecurity protocols. The industry has experienced break-ins, animal releases and undercover videos. Police responses to trespassing incidents are often slow and sometimes non-existent. Courts have dropped charges against individuals seeing them as minor transgressions, but they have far reaching implications. The fact that charges are not pursued only serves to encourage extremist activities. In some cases when charges have been laid the fines and penalties are not sufficient to deter their actions.

When these groups enter a farm, often at night, it is stressful for the animals, creates poor animal welfare conditions and exposes the animals to biosecurity hazards and disease. The animals react very differently to strangers with lights and at unfamiliar times of day.

On several occasions, nursing mothers have been released, creating stress for both the mother and the cold crying kits, which are often unable to survive. Released mink do not have the skills to survive in the wild and often starve to death or killed on the roads or highways.

These events are traumatizing to the animals, farm families and employees.

Attached is a victim impact statement from a mink producer who has experienced the actions of the extremists.

We agree with you that the provincial laws and penalties across Canada are not uniform, are inconsistent and are in some cases, antiquated. Many of the fines and penalties do not serve as a deterrent to animal extremists.

We applaud Ontario's recent adoption of Bill 156 and see Bill C-205 as complimenting this legislation. In other cases, it would demonstrate leadership and encourage provinces to review their current legislation.

Animal rights extremists' campaigns continue to put pressure on the agricultural industry as they see break and entering, trespassing, theft, harassment and other criminal actions as justified. In some cases, these extremists have trespassed under false pretenses to gain entry to the property.

We welcome legislation that can protect our animals, farms, families and employees from diseases and undue stress from illegal invasions of our farms and barns, all couched under the false claim of "protecting animals from abuse".



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Animal extremists believe it is only they that can expose abuse. They believe that because farmed animals are housed in barns and cannot be seen by the public that they are subject to abuse. Therefore, by trespassing onto farms, taking undercover video and/or releasing the animals, they are exposing this abuse.

However, their ultimate goal is to bring an end to animal agriculture.

We all have an obligation to expose animal cruelty by utilizing existing enforcement such as police and or provincial animal welfare inspectors who have the authority, training and education to fulfill these responsibilities.

Bill C-205 would signal to enforcement the severity of these crimes and provide them with the authority to implement significant charges.

In a democratic society, we all have opportunities to lawfully express our concerns. We are entitled to our own beliefs and we do not always have to agree. However, one group should not be permitted to act in a criminal manner to impose its beliefs on others - without consequence. This bill contains concrete measures, such as prison sentences and significant fines, which would deter such criminal activities.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to present the Canada Mink Breeders Association's perspectives on Bill C-205, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act. We would like to commend this bill to protect Canada's farms, families, employees and the animals. Strengthening penalties is something that our Association and its members support.

We urge full support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Matthew Moses
President

Enclosure



Living in Fear: Animal Release on My Farm – Victim Impact Statement

By Robert Bollert, mink & fox farmer

Good morning and thank you for taking this valuable time to hear about my personal experience. My name is Rob Bollert, and I live in southern Ontario. I feel it necessary to give you a quick background of my family and our history in the Fur Industry. The history books show that my great grandfather C. R. Bollert started raising both mink and fox over 95 years ago. In 1929 he brought the largest shipment of 1100 Alaskan mink into Canada on a train car. By 1934 the Ranch grew to over 5000 mink and 1000 fox.

In 1943 my grandfather Howard Bollert went on to produce an exclusive one-of-a-kind fox herd known as Dawn Glo which has been worn in garments by the likes of Princess Grace Kelly, The Duchess of Windsor and most recently Jennifer Lopez and Kim Kardashian.

In the early 1990s my father Robert Bollert took over from his father to become the third generation to raise mink and fox on this farm.

Unfortunately, on August 26th 2014, I received a call just after 6 am in the morning. The last call anyone in our industry wants to hear. It was my 70 year old father in utter panic claiming there were animals running everywhere. Not really knowing the severity of it, I immediately rushed to his aid on the farm. As I approached the farm, I was greeted by vehicles stopped on the side of the road helping an injured fox that had been hit by a car. Unfortunately, we could not save it. After cresting the hill to our ranch, it seemed surreal. A Jurassic Park like theme. Both mink and fox running aimlessly throughout the long grass and mature corn fields surrounding the farm.

For hours, family and friends as well as law enforcement helped rescue as many animals as possible. For weeks afterwards, the animals we were unable to save that day became victims of coyotes or were found dead on the local roads. Over 800 mink and 80 fox were released by radicals that day. In the weeks following



the release, those mink that were rescued suffered from distemper. The farm lost 800 to 900 animals to this disease.

My father, a man who had seen all the ups and downs of our industry was heart stricken to see our family history - his livelihood running down the road. That day took the wind out of his sails! Never believing that anyone could inflict this extreme cruelty to enforce their beliefs. He felt violated that someone had trespassed in the middle of the night while both he and my mother slept! After many dollars spent on security and numerous sleepless nights, his long-time farm manager resigned because of fear. It never leaves your head. That fear that someone is out there releasing your animals in the middle of the night constantly looms.

After taking over the reins from my father in 2015, I can honestly say that fear hasn't changed. There isn't a night that goes by that I'm not watching my security cameras or investigating a car parked down the road. The fear that that day will come again will never leave. My daughters are now at an age that they realize who some of these radicals are and that they want to shut us down. It scares them. Just watching the actions at some of the recent protests makes them uneasy! The mere thought of walking to school or being home alone while these extremists are out there is terrifying. I guess my fear is that someday these radicals will take it too far.

Like many livestock commodities we are annually inspected to ensure the animals have the very best humane care possible and follow the National Farm Animal Care Codes of Practice. Our farm exceeds the highest Bio-security standards of any livestock industry in Canada. We don't take these standards lightly!

In closing, today, 5 generations later Bollert Farms still proudly raises Mink and Fox and I plan to continue to contribute some of the world's very best mink and fox to our Canadian heritage..... The Fur Trade!



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The BOLLERT
Fox and Fur Farm

