

skinning in Nov-Dec, but they suffer from many kind of symptoms; kidney damage, poor breeding result etc.

During spring 1992 distemper virus appeared on many Finnish fur farms. Eventually distemper was found in 27 farms all over Vaasa county, and the area put in quarantine. Distemper was most fatal for ferret (fitch); a farmer saw 2000 out of 8000 cubs of his ferrets killed by distemper. At this time distemper virus was not very powerful, and most animals (excluding ferrets) stayed alive and they are said to have only slight symptoms. Anyhow, animals having distemper suffer from various kind of symptoms: discharging of nostrils and eyes, sensitive feet, bellyache etc.

Salmonella-bacterium is a problem on Finnish fur farms. According to the recent investigation one third of farms has salmonella. This means the compost coming from these farms can not be used in root vegetable fields as manure. Is it used, who knows?

It is not rare that animals suffer from food poisoning on Finnish fur farms. In spring 1992 hygienic problems in feed resulted in unsuccessful whelping on some fox farms.

Cold weather during winter cause a lot of harm for animals. Both drinking water and feed is easily frozen. Wind coming from downside (which never happens in nature!) through steel cross-wire may cause inflammation in urinary tracts and some other problems as well. Raccoon dog which normally in nature sleeps in winter is especially susceptible to cold weather. Fur of raccoon dog on underparts is thin and it lacks totally on paw soles.

Complaints against fur advertisement

In October 1992 Finnish Union for the Conservation of Nature made a complaint against misleading fur advertisement in Finland. They asked the consumer authorities to judge if words "eco", "environmentally friendly", "nature's own product" and "regenerating product of nature which does not impoverish nor spoil environment" together with fur products are wrong. FUCN has got a lot of material (e.g. the judgement of Dutch Advertising Standards Authority for the same complaint) from ANIMALIA.

Now ANIMALIA - Finnish Federation for the Protection of Animals has also made a complaint against fur ads. ANIMALIA has complained not only about environmental aspects but about animal welfare statements, too. Fur ads argue eg. "animal protection is necessary for fur trade", and "farmed fur animals are the best cared domestic animals in the world". The complaint made by ANIMALIA is better documented and covers a wider range than that of FUCNs.

Financial aid from government

In mid 1980s currency influx from fur trade was 1.5 billion FIM (total currency influx to Finland was about 100 billion. Of that forest industry covered 40 billion FIM or in other words 40 %). Today influx is 400 million FIM. More than 90 % of Finnish furs go abroad.

These are reasons why Finnish government give financial aid to fur farming. For example, in 1986 the aid consisted of 23 million FIM for farm investments, 350 million FIM for transporting ingredients of feed from abroad, and tens of millions FIM for buying ingredients of feed from Finnish markets and conserving feed. There are also some other forms of aid but of lesser value.

In 1990-91 the 150 million FIM aid was given straight to farmers because of financial loss caused by depression in fur markets. So, we Finnish tax payers paid the difference between costs of fur production in farms and prices of fur in markets