

Table 2.: World production of mink in 1987

Denmark	10.100,000
U.S.S.R.	4,500,000
U.S.A.	4,400,000
Finland	3,800,000
China	3,300,000
Sweden	2,100,000
Holland	1,650,000
Canada	1,500,000
Japan	750,000
France	550,000
Further	3,076,000
Sum total	35,726,000

(Source: Deutsche Pelztierzüchter)

behaviour: mink, for instance, will bite their own skins, gnaw at their congenes, or they constantly run up and down their cages for hours at a stretch, seventy centimeters up, seventy centimeters down and that again and again, dozens of times at a stretch. Mink, out of boredom damaging their own skins, are killed instantly, since it is useless to go on taking care of them once they have acquired this habit. Recent research in Holland has shown that 50% of the mink held captivated exhibit this stereotyped behaviour over 25% of the time. The animals just run up and down their little cages, always the same pattern, or they turn their heads round and round, sometimes for six hours at a stretch.

FOXES

Over 5 million foxes are annually bred at fur farms(cf.table 3.).Foxes are kept in almost the same manner as mink: their cages are somewhat larger and they only have a nesting-box at their disposal when the babies have just been born. Foxes are, therefore, living on a wire bottom permanently.

The baby foxes are born in spring and killed in autumn.

The mothers which have survived "harvesting time" are put on a strict diet in winter. At the end of February they have lost a quarter of their weight. According to a fox-breeding manual this is supposed to be the best way to augment their fertility. But not all vixen survive this diet.

DISTRESS WITH FOXES

Abnormal behaviour such as skin-biting and apathy is a frequent phenomenon

with foxes. They often sit with their stomachs squeezed flat onto the floor of their cages. Some vixen even bite their babies dead. 20% of the young foxes die before their skins are "pelt-ripe".

Foxes, just like mink, get a ball of high-protein food put on top of their cages once or twice a day, which the animals lick up through the meshes. In winter they have to eat fast in order to prevent the feed from freezing. It sometimes happens that the tongues of the animals freeze on to the wire net while they are licking. A Finnish magazine some time ago showed some pictures of a fox with its torn off tongue beside it.

THE KILLING OF FOXES

In November the fur of the foxes is at its thickest, so at its best for the breeder, and pelting time begins. A lethal injection or electrocution are the two most used means for killing foxes.

An electrocution apparatus consists of a battery, a metal bar and a clamp. The bar is put in the anus, the clamp is fastened round the mouth, a switch is turned on, the electric current shoots through the body. Dead.

COYPU

The coypu very much looks like a beaver in built, but it has not got a flat tail. These animals are also excellent swimmers. They mainly live on water-plants. As they have been bred for years, and on a large scale at that, while a great many of them have been set free or have escaped, they nowadays occur almost everywhere in the world.

They too are fervent diggers, so that they can also damage agricultural crops and river-banks. Usually coypu are kept in their dozens in concrete reservoirs of about 10m each. Coypu skin, called Nutria, often fetches but a modest price, so that the breeders try to interest restaurants in the meat too, which is served under the name of "Myocastor".

OTHER ANIMALS

Coypus, chinchillas, polecats and raccoons are all kept in cages, but so far the

Table 3.: World production of home-bred foxes 1987

Finland	3,255,000
Norway	706,000
Poland	528,000
Danmark	215,000
U.S.S.R.	184,000
Canada	95,000
Holland	90,000
Further	201,000
Sum total	5,274,000

Source: (Deutsche Pelztierzüchter)

breeding of mink and foxes has become big business. Breeding other kinds of furred animals brings even more problems with it, but the breeders keep experimenting with other species. In the U.S.A., for instance, they are experimenting with lynxes, opossums and beavers. In Montana, U.S.A., a totally neglected beaver farm was discovered the other day. The owner had left, simply abandoning the animals.

FUR AND ENVIRONMENT

Fur farms are not only torture to the animals: human beings and their environment also suffer from them. People living near a fur farm experience this every day. Stench, loose hair flying about, fly-nuisances, rat and mouse-plagues plus the constant clamour of mink or foxes. These farms are also a psychic burden on people: they know that within a stone's throw from their houses thousands of animals are being killed for the sake of a useless product.

GROUND WATER

Whereas in the rest of the bio-industry dung is collected in some kind of receptacle and removed via drains, fur farmers still use the old-fashioned method: the droppings of mink and foxes fall through the meshes of the bottom of the cage and remain in their place for times on end. Together with spilled drinking-water, with rain water and urine the whole combination penetrates the surface of the earth slowly, and chemicals such as phosphate and nitrate slowly but surely pollute the ground water. From an inquiry into Dutch fur farms of 1987 it appeared that the ground water was already heavily contaminated at three quarters of the farms in question. The breeders were