

the figures rather vary with the different animal species.

THE TRADE IN FUR

This trade is a branch of industry in which billions of dollars are turned over world-wide. The total returns of the largest fur buying country, the United States, amounts to a value of 1,3 billion dollars. From animal to coat several sectors of the fur industry have to do with the skins: the breeder or trapper kills and skins the animals, after which the skins are sold in auctions and treated with chemicals. The furrier sews them, making them into coats, after which shopkeepers try to sell the coats in their turn.

Half of the undressed hides are offered for sale at the auctions of e.g. Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leningrad, London, Seattle and Toronto.

Dressed skins and coats are mostly sold in the largest fur fairs of the world, e.g. at Frankfurt, Montreal, Hong Kong and New York.

SURPLUSES

Stagnating sales have caused a gigantic surplus of mink skins of late. At the

beginning of 1988 almost 20% of the over 34 million mink skins (annual production of 1986) were not sold yet. Skins which do not fetch the minimum price are destroyed. They are withdrawn from the market and then done away with, because it would be too expensive to store them away until the next season. Besides, too many skins for a following year would mean even lower prices.

THE FIGHT AGAINST ANIMAL PROTECTIONISTS

Fur traders naturally try to justify their occupation. Animal suffering does not play any role in their business. As a consequence of the anti fur campaigns they have organized themselves better in many countries the last few years.

Furriers even took the trouble to visit a fur farm for the first time in their lives in order to orientate themselves, or they went on a day's outing with a trapper in order to learn more. The fur trade from 36 countries have united themselves into the International Fur Trade Federation (I.F.T.F.). In their press releases they criticize the activities of the animal protectionists' organizations, arguing, for instance, that seals consume too much fish, so that they ought to be hunted again.

Fur traders maintain they need 25 million dollars every year to fight animal protection. With that money they support national campaigns for the promotion of fur. In 1987, for instance, they spent 2 million deutschmark on behalf of the trade in Germany, which was falling off. In December 1987 German fur traders appealed for help in a secret letter to the members. According to them many more millions more will be needed to change the reluctant buying-attitude of the fur consumers.

Italy recently pushed Germany off its third place on the world-list of fur buyers.

Public relations' bureaux advise the fur traders in the United States please not to start any discussions about fur. They apparently suppose that each discussion about the subject will only work against themselves. Fur traders obviously have no valid arguments to plead for themselves.

Fur breeders also attempt to cover themselves. Hunters' associations have taught them that, if you want to shoot an animal, you just have to say that you

want to bring the natural level of wildlife down to normal standards.

The breeders of furred animals have also united themselves. They have founded the "International Welfare Organization for Fur Farmed Animals (IWOFFA)", which organization aims at showing up fur breeding to a better advantage, for instance by organizing prize competitions for the members.

Canada occupies a special position in the anti fur discussion.

The Canadian traders in fur have lodged their interests safely and even to such a degree that the Canadian government is prepared to invest 8 million dollars in the promotion of fur. However, the Canadians have been given a smart lesson when they saw themselves forced by economic measures to stop clubbing baby seals to death.

ANIMAL PROTECTIONISTS ARE GAINING RESULTS

Thanks to the publicity campaigns of animal protectionists the demand for fur has decreased sharply in several countries.

In Switzerland the sales have gone down by 75%. In the Netherlands no respectable person buys a fur coat any more and the dealers do admit themselves that the sale of fur has decreased by over 90%.

In Great Britain 75% of the population are flatly against wearing fur, while even in Canada, where the government strongly supports the fur trade, 82% of the people choose for the protection of furred animals.

Notably by the world-wide initiative of the World Society for the Protection of Animals informative campaigns are getting started in many countries. Even in Finland, with its 6000 fur farms, there has been an active anti fur group for some time now.

All over the world all sorts of activities are being carried on. One of the most spectacular ones was an action in the Netherlands, during which a fur coat was sent to the NASA space lab with the request to get rid of it under the motto "Fur to disappear from this world".

CHINCHILLA

Centuries ago the chinchilla was a rodent which occurred in great numbers

Table 4.: The number of animals needed for one fur coat:

Animals	No. of pelts needed
Calf	6-8
Puma	6-8
Foal	6-8
Seal	6-10
Lynx	8-12
Badger	10-12
Otter	10-16
Fox	10-20
Ocelot	12-18
Dog(!)	15-20
Bobcat	16-22
Kangaroo	20-30
Domestic cat	20-30
Lamb	25-45
Marsh beaver	26-34
Raccoon	30-40
Mink	30-70
Rabbit	30-40
Polecat	45-55
Marten	50-60
Sable	60-70
Skunk	60-70
Chinchilla	30-200
Squirrel	200-400

(Source: Rauchwarenhandbuch)