



## Carnage in the English Countryside

By Teresa Platt, Executive Director, Fur Commission USA

**O**n August 9, 6,000 mink were released from a fur farm in the English county of Hampshire, followed eight days later by a further release of 1,000 mink, many of which had just been recaptured from the same farm. Subsequent efforts to deal with the critters have forced locals to take a hard look at the realities of animal “liberation”.

What are the costs, they are now asking, of releasing non-indigenous creatures into the wild? Is it ethical to deprive domesticated animals of the protection of the farm? And most troubling of all, why has a nation of animal lovers resorted to the use of bats, shovels, guns, dogs and anything else that is handy to kill the released mink?

How can anyone concerned with animal welfare condone this unsupervised carnage in the English countryside, this animal cruelty, as an acceptable political ploy?

### Brown spots on the road

For those of you so far spared the horror of finding out, what does a mink release really look like? It's simple. Animals not quickly rounded up become roadkill, dinner for other critters, or die of stress or starvation. This was acknowledged following the latest release by Animal Liberation Front (ALF) spokesman Robin Webb. “Many of the mink are going to die,” he said. But he continued, “At least they will have had a taste of freedom. Some will survive and be able to live in a natural way.”

In a “natural way”? And just what is a “natural” way for farm-raised animals?

“Natural” - that is, what is normal - for domestically raised animals is life on a farm, a life of food delivered, no predators, mating, birthing, weaning, living and dying under the care of humans. “Unnatural” is being driven into the wild, forced to search for food in foreign terrain, being beaten to death by scared housewives, ripped to pieces by dogs and run over by cars.

“If [the mink] had remained,” continued Webb, “all would have been killed simply to make fur coats.” Yes, after their deaths, the outsides of farm-raised mink are used to make garments. The insides go to

make animal feed, oils and organic fertilizer.

But for the mink newly “liberated” into the English countryside, their bodies will go to feed predators, scavengers and bacteria. Man will not benefit from these animals, and that is the point. Man, say the animal rightists, has no right to benefit from animals at all. After all, we don't *need animals* anymore, they argue; we have *synthetics* to keep us warm.

In the *Birmingham Post* (Aug. 12), Dennis Ellam blamed the release on a “misguided philosophy” attacking an industry that is an “affront” to the British people. His article is cutely entitled “Invasion of the Killer Minks.” [As every U.S. fur farmer knows, a “killer mink” is that vicious, impossible cross of a mink and a lynx, more commonly called a “minx” by city folk. No wonder the English are nervous! - editor].

States Ellam emphatically, “The weekend's escapade, and the resulting mayhem, are the consequence of misguided philosophy. Many a reasonable person, in fact, would abhor the working of mink farms anywhere in Britain, since we are a society which has largely taken the decision - voluntarily, and not by coercion or the threat of violence - that the wearing of animal fur is no longer acceptable.

“In other countries, in particular those where the winter brings a daily battle against the elements, such as Canada and Scandinavia, the trade in furs still thrives, simply because there is no synthetic alternative which is adequate for the conditions.

“It is a justifiable argument, that those populations who continue to wear mink should produce their own. The fur-farming industry which remains in the UK is surely an affront, here, to a changing public ethic.”

Interesting, isn't it, that an educated, literate person living comfortably in an industrialized country would argue that the wearing of polluting, non-renewable petro-chemical products is actually an acceptable alternative to a 100-percent natural product?

## Labour Party Supports Animal Rights

The great minx debate continued at the political level when ALF attacked the Labour Party for not doing enough to promote rights for animals. Gisela Stuart, Labour Member of Parliament for Birmingham Edgbaston, was insulted and proclaimed that the Labour Party is “determined to end fur farming as soon as possible.” But she didn’t stop there. Her statement, also published by the *Birmingham Post*, claimed that Labour’s animal rights agenda marches on.

Listed on Stuart’s Labour Party manifesto of concerns for animals were higher welfare standards throughout the European Union, trade barriers against fur from trapped animals, licenses and stricter regulations for live animal exports, and educational requirements for handling the animals.

According to Stuart, Labour had succeeded in banning the export of horses for slaughter, had changed the EU’s official definition of animals to “sentient beings”, and was pushing for less intensive animal production, new rules for slaughterhouses, and the phasing out of battery egg production across Europe.

Labour was also working to ban commercial whaling, to establish a global whale sanctuary, to ban international trade in whale products, and to oppose coastal whaling. Labour, she claimed, had succeeded in banning the “electronic” lance in whaling [presumed to be a reference to the “electric” lance – editor].

Stuart and her Party, she said, are also working hard to eliminate drift nets in order to “protect dolphins, sharks and turtles”, and have succeeded in banning badger culling. They also, we are told, continue to push for the abolition of hunting with hounds, have suspended licenses for hunting on Forestry Commission land, and have ended “cub hunting and digging foxes out.” Additionally, Stuart claimed, Labour have succeeded in introducing restrictions on hunts and banning deer hunting on Commission land. Some of Stuart’s claims are dreams, some are under intense debate, and some are actual prohibitions under English law. Busy, busy, busy.

## The Great British Summer “Minx” Round-Up

The Great British Summer “Minx” Round Up illustrated an amazing contradiction between how some people view animals intellectually, and treat them in practice.

Here we have the English, whose greatest 20th-century export is the flawed philosophy of “animal rights”, killing thousands of dazed and confused creatures with little debate or concern over the humaneness of the killing methods used.

A housewife living not far from the fur farm became a media darling after bludgeoning several mink to bloody tatters with a shovel. The plucky woman stated, “They are damned vicious and I had to bash them. They were even going for the dogs.” Of course, maybe the dogs were going for the mink, but who will ever know? Dead mink tell no tales. Oooops, I mean minks or “minx”, the English sub-species.

This flawed view of reality was shared by a group of Florida animal rightists who specialized in rehabilitating dolphins before returning them to the wild. They were happily cutting the tails off live fish before tossing the disabled creatures into the dolphin tank in an effort to teach the mammals to catch live food. Until a fisherman questioned the ethics of their actions, the dolphin liberators had not thought about the inhumanity of chopping tails off fish. The fourth-generation fisherman simply stated, “I’ve killed millions of fish in my time, but I never tortured them first.” You could have heard a pin drop.

At issue in England is that responsible fur farmers turn our backs on plastics and petro-chemical products every time we whelp and wean and raise and put down our millions of animals each year. At issue in England is that responsible trappers turn their backs on plowing under more acres to cotton as they take nature’s surplus, maintaining a balance between habitat and wildlife populations. Every spring and summer and fall and winter, as long as the seasons of life and death come and go, the pelts from this natural process protect millions of people from the harshness of the elements. Naturally. And yes, the natural process includes death as well as life, and we face this reality with honesty and with respect for the animals which provide us with this bounty.

Yes, we kill millions of animals every year. But we never torture them first.

Can the same be said for England’s animal rightists and their compatriots who could not conceive of a more humane way to kill animals than to beat them with shovels or run them over with their cars?

Shame.