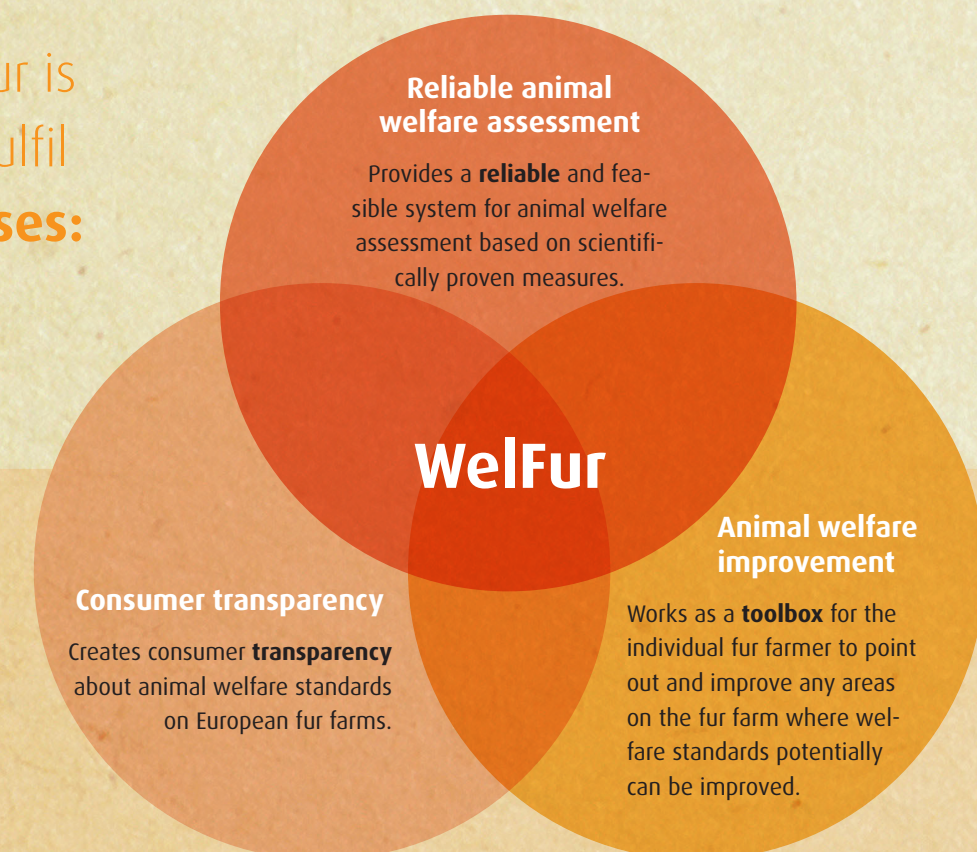


Animal welfare is an area which receives more and more attention from media, NGOs, consumers and politicians. In order to meet the expectations from the surrounding society, animal industries must meet the public concerns openly, demonstrate transparency, and have a continued focus on improving animal welfare conditions.

With that in mind, the European Fur Information Center initiated the WelFur project for fur farmed species (mink and fox) in 2009, and the finalised protocols were printed in 2013 and 2014. The protocol for fox will follow. The WelFur system is based on the methodology of the European Commission's Welfare Quality® project, which is widely recognized as one of the world's most comprehensive animal welfare assessment system.

Overall, WelFur is designed to fulfil **three purposes:**



## Science-based animal welfare

Animal welfare can be a difficult concept to pin down, and most people have their own personal views. Despite this, there is general agreement within the scientific community about what represents good animal welfare. This consensus is reflected in the four welfare principles established in the European Commission's Welfare Quality® project: Good Housing, Good Feeding, Good Health and Appropriate Behaviour.

Within the principles Good Housing, Good Feeding, Good Health and Appropriate Behaviour, the Welfare Quality® project defined 12 specific animal welfare criteria. Below the 12 criteria are a number of welfare measurements which are species-specific and must consider the biology of the animal species.



The specific welfare measurements for mink and fox have been chosen by the scientists behind their project for their scientific validity, reliability and feasibility. Representing a consortium of 7 European universities and institutions\*, the scientists did an in-depth review of all existing animal welfare research on fur animals before they identified the welfare indicators and measurements that eventually became the WelFur protocols.

During the development of WelFur, several hundred measures have been considered, and upon the completion of the WelFur protocols, the scientists will produce a transparency paper explaining in details the reason for the final choices of measurements.

Throughout the development of WelFur, external scientific reviewers have conserved the quality of the scientific work and the alignment with the original Welfare Quality® project. The scoring of the welfare measurements have been accomplished with the support of INRA (French National Institute of Agronomic Research).

### Good Feeding

- by providing ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.

### Good Housing

- by providing an appropriate environment with thermal comfort, a comfortable resting area, and enough space for the animals to move around freely.

### Good Health

- by keeping animals free from pain, injuries, disease and maintain high standards of hygiene and care.

### Appropriate Behavior

- by ensuring animals can express species-specific behaviors, and normal, non-harmful, social behaviors. Negative emotions such as fear, distress, frustration, or apathy should be avoided whereas positive emotions such as security or contentment should be promoted.

\* The WelFur protocols are carried out in a cooperation between the following universities and institutions:

- University of Eastern Finland (Department of Biosciences)
- MTT Agrifood Research Finland (Animal Production Research)
- Aarhus University (Department of Animal Health and Bioscience)
- Norwegian University of Life Sciences (Department of Animal and Aquacultural Sciences)
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Department of Animal Environment and Health)
- University of Utrecht (Department of Animals in Science & Society)
- French National Institute of Agronomic Research

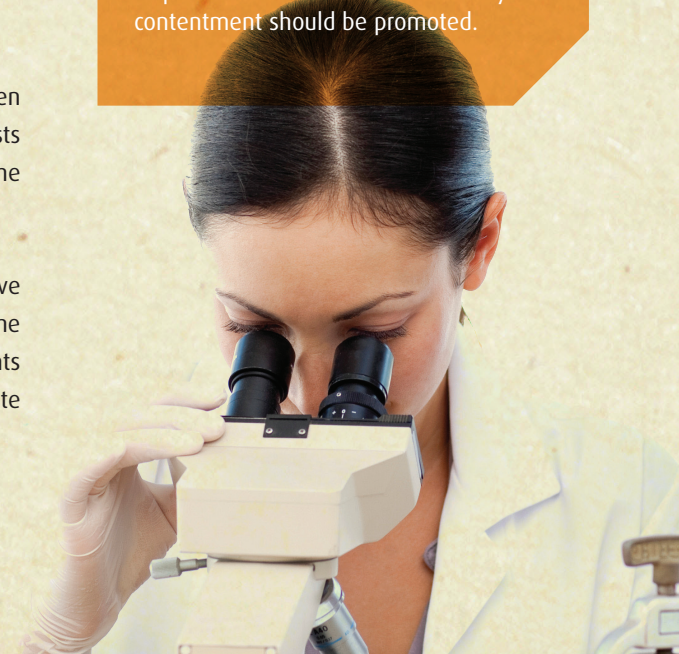


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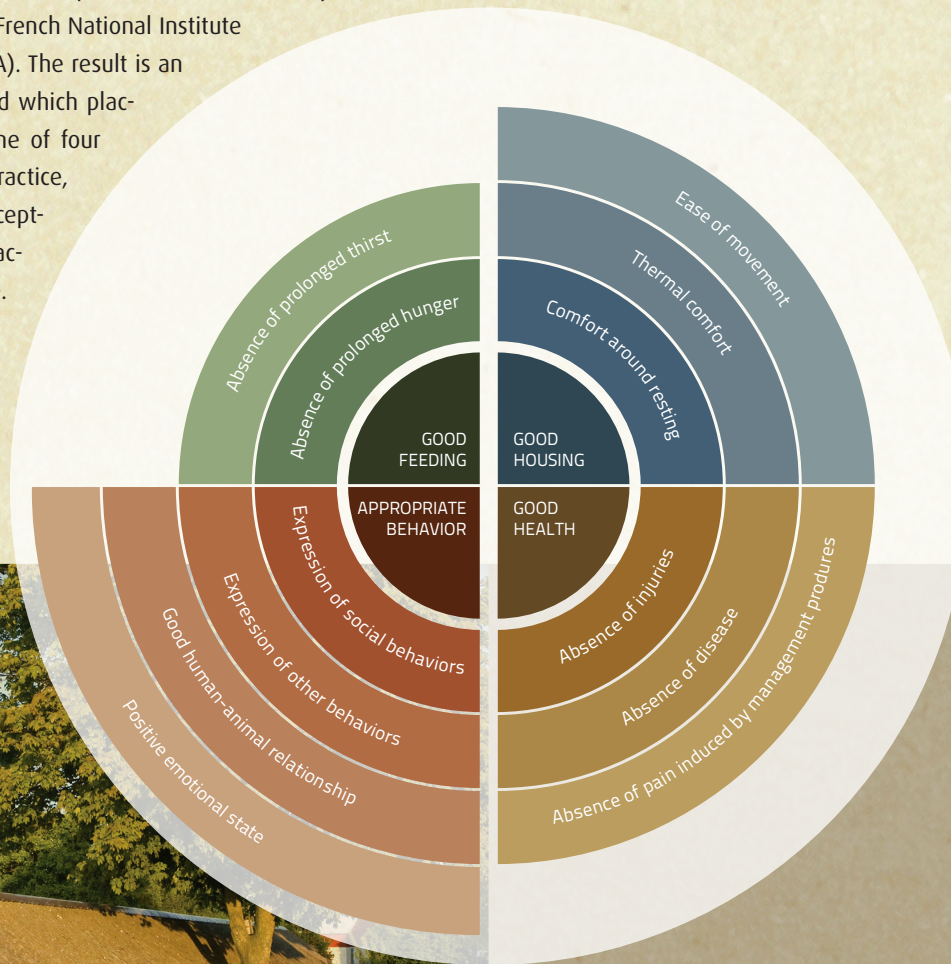
## Practical use of WelFur

The strength of WelFur as an animal welfare assessment system is the comprehensive approach to animal welfare which is measured methodologically and from various angles. At present, animal welfare assessment on European fur farms is typically performed by national authorities who mainly look for compliance with legislation. However, the levels of control and the basic legislation differ considerably from one European country to the other. WelFur assessment of the individual fur farm will be performed every year at different times of the year taking the biological life cycle of fur animals into consideration.

There are 23 measurements to assess the welfare of foxes and 22 measurements for mink. The measurements are either resource-based, management-based, or animal based. Animal-based measures are generally the best method to assess animal welfare but it is not always the case. For example it is difficult to see if an animal is thirsty by observing the animal. However, if the animal always has access to fresh water you can conclude that the animal is not thirsty, why a resource-based measure is preferred to an animal-based measure in this

case. About half of the measurements in the protocols for mink and fox are animal-based.

All measurements are carried out on a representative farm sample of 80 fox cages and 120 mink cages in order to gain a representative overall view of the individual farm. The data from the farm assessment is then processed and stored by software, developed by the French National Institute of Agronomic Research (INRA). The result is an easy-to-understand scorecard which places the individual farm in one of four categories: Best Current Practice, Good Current Practice, Acceptable Current Practice or Unacceptable Current Practice. The scorecard will point out any areas of weak animal welfare on the farm, and the fur farmer can use this information as a tool to improve animal welfare.



## Transparency for the public

On an annual basis, the European Fur Information Center will publish reports with relevant data from the assessments. These reports provide the general public with a reliable insight into the welfare standards on European fur farms. Also the national fur breeders' associations have the opportunity to publish results from the WelFur assessments.

### Future objectives of WelFur

- WelFur is being implemented on all European fur farms associated with the European Fur Information Center from 2014 and onward.
- It is the objective that the WelFur assessments are undertaken by third-parties. They can be national authorities, veterinarians or other external assessors.
- The European Fur Information Center suggest that WelFur could serve as a scientific reference for regulation and control of European fur farms.
- The WelFur protocols will be renewed every 5 years based on a revision of the current protocols, recommendations from external reviewers and new scientific research.
- It is the aim to increase the number of animal-based measures in the future.

### Ethics

Though social sciences, including ethics, played a major part in the development of the original Welfare Quality® project, ethical issues are not specifically addressed in the WelFur protocols. However, parallel to WelFur, the European Fur Information Center has set up an Ethical Committee, and the scope of the Ethical Committee is to analyze ethics in the European fur farming sector. Considering areas like animal welfare, sustainability, the value of animals, and various moral views, the committee can point out ethical gaps in the fur production. Ultimately, the European fur sector will introduce an ethical charter in order to ensure the public that consistent ethical consideration is integrated in the European fur production.

# WELFUR

## SCIENCE-BASED ANIMAL WELFARE ASSESSMENT

