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Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs Committee

Fur trade in the UK

Seventh Report of Session 2017–19

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

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The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

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Summary

In recent years, there have been high-profile cases of real fur being sold as fake fur by major high-street and online retailers. This “fake faux fur” was made from a variety of animals including rabbit, fox and chinchilla. We launched our inquiry in February 2018 in the light of investigations by Humane Society International UK, Sky News and BBC London News.

Our Report examined how the industry can be made more transparent for consumers. We also examined whether, longer-term, Brexit could provide an opportunity for the UK Government to change legislation around the import of fur.

The Committee’s key recommendations and conclusions are:

- Consumers should be able to have confidence in the product they are purchasing. All retailers, including online sellers and marketplace sellers, have a responsibility to ensure that they are selling items as described. We recognise that it is more difficult for online market sellers to examine all the products they sell, but that does not remove the responsibility they have to ensure that the products they sell on their site are correctly described. All retailers must comply with the law and those named in the Report have not done enough to track the risk of selling real fur accidentally. This is not something that should have been discovered by campaign organisations and the media.
- The retail industry must not be complacent about the issue of fake faux fur. We welcome the work that has been done so far to improve the supply chain and to improve communications with online sellers, and call on the retail industry to ensure that this continues.
- It is illegal to give misleading information about the characteristics of goods. We are disappointed that there has been a lack of enforcement by Trading Standards officers in local authorities against those retailers responsible. The Government must ensure that local authorities are properly resourced to deliver these services.
- We call on local authorities to ensure that Trading Standards officers enforce the law on selling fake faux fur. Where required, we call on local authorities to ensure that Trading Standards officers receive training on this issue and to conduct proactive investigations into the mis-sale of real fur as fake fur.
- Consumers have a right to know what they are buying. The current EU labelling regime lacks clarity and is confusing for retailers and consumers alike. The “animal origin” label is unclear, and can refer to a number of animal products in a garment; it does not specifically identify when a product contains real animal fur. The labelling of clothes has to be consistent, transparent and customer-friendly.

- We welcome the Government's acknowledgment that the current EU labelling regime is confusing and needs amending. The Government's ability to amend the labelling regime after Brexit will depend on the nature of the future EU-UK trading relationship.
- We recommend the introduction of a new mandatory labelling regime that identifies fur and other animal products accurately. The fur label should show the species of fur, the country of origin and method of production. We call on the Government to amend the labelling regime for products containing fur post-Brexit.
- We recommend that the Government holds a public consultation to consider whether to ban fur. In looking at whether to ban the sale and import of fur post-Brexit, the Government will have to balance the needs of animal welfare against consumer choice.

1 Introduction

1. In the EU, it is legal to import and sell fur from a range of species such as fox, rabbit, mink, coyote, racoon dog and chinchilla.¹ EU regulations ban trade in fur from domestic cats, dogs or commercial seal hunts.²
2. Many consumers make a decision not to buy fur on ethical and animal welfare grounds, but choose to buy fake fur, made of synthetic fibres. In recent years, there have been high-profile cases of real fur being sold as fake fur by major high-street and online retailers. This “fake faux fur” was made from a variety of animals including rabbit, fox and chinchilla.

Our inquiry

3. We launched our inquiry in February 2018 in the light of investigations by Humane Society International UK, Sky News and BBC London News. We examined how the industry can be made more transparent for consumers. We also examined whether, longer-term, Brexit could provide an opportunity for the UK Government to change legislation around the import of fur.
4. We took oral evidence from Humane Society International UK, Sky News, BBC London News, representatives from across the retail sector, representatives from the fur industry, the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). We are grateful to those who provided oral and written evidence. We congratulate the Humane Society International UK, Sky News and BBC London News for their work in this area.

1 Fur farming was banned in the UK in 2000.

2 Commission Regulation 1523/2207 bans the import, export and placing on the market of cat and dog fur, as well as products made from such sources. Commission Regulation 1007/2009 and 2015/1850 bans the commercial imports of baby harp seal and hooded seal skins, and items made from such skins.

2 Mis-selling of real fur as fake fur

5. In the last few years, there have been a number of examples of the mis-selling of real fur as fake fur. In April 2017, a joint investigation between Humane Society International UK (HSI UK) and Sky News identified that House of Fraser and Missguided were mis-selling real fur as faux fur. In total, it found rabbit, racoon dog, and mink fur.

6. They returned to the issue in December 2017 and January 2018 and found that other retail companies, online sellers, and market sellers were also selling real fur as fake fur. Retailers included TK Maxx, BooHoo, Amazon, Not On The High Street, Groupon, Etsy, Tesco, FatFace, Boots, Kurt Geiger, and Romwe. Many of these retailers had no-fur policies.

7. In February 2018, BBC London News investigated the issue by visiting stalls and shops in Camden Market, stalls in Shepherds Bush and Stratford market, and wholesalers in Commercial Road in East London. The investigation found numerous examples of real fur being sold as fake fur.

8. During our inquiry, we took evidence from a number of these retailers to learn how real fur had been mis-sold as fake fur and what changes had been put in place to ensure that this would not happen again.

Retailers

9. HSI UK told us that the incidents of high-street retailers selling real animal fur as fake fur were few, in comparison to the amount of fake fur sold as a whole.³ However, it said that the sale of “fake faux fur” appeared more widespread through small independent stores, market stalls and online platforms.⁴ While the majority of cases seemed to be genuine errors, there were instances of retailers and traders setting out to deliberately mislead customers. Ceri Davies, Operations Director at Camden Market, acknowledged that there were some instances of “try[ing] to slip [real fur] through the system”.⁵

10. Many of the items mis-sold as fake fur were small items, and low in price. Examples included, but were not restricted to, fur trims on hats and gloves, pom-poms on hats and clothing, and fur trims on footwear. HSI UK told us that due to “high-volume, low-welfare intensive farming of animals”, real fur could be produced and sold more cheaply than fake fur.⁶

11. Retailers argued that, like consumers, they assumed that the low cost of the product from their supplier was a good indicator that the product did not contain real fur. House of Fraser told us that there had been a lack of knowledge about why a supply chain would be contaminated with real fur, and that this “was something that only really came to light with the Sky News inquiry”.⁷

3 Q11

4 Q11

5 Q197

6 Humane Society International UK ([FUR0040](#))

7 Q111

12. Witnesses from the retail sector admitted that their own processes had not identified that real fur had entered their supply chain.⁸ However, it appears that retailers across the industry did not react to initial findings in spring 2017. Continued investigations uncovered further examples of fake faux fur nine months later. As Sarah Hajibagheri, a reporter from Sky News, noted:

... given the level of publicity, and having seen rival fashion firms in the headlines, you would have thought that most companies would therefore look at their own procedures and their own schedules in terms of buying products, to make sure that they had the right checks in place.⁹

It is disappointing that they did not.

13. Paul Horsfield, Merchandising Director at BooHoo, admitted that the company had had misplaced confidence in its processes, and had not investigated the issue: “We felt at the time that the processes we had in place were pretty robust, if I am being honest. That is why there was no further investigation”.¹⁰

14. In some instances, retailers had not reacted sufficiently to concerns raised by their own customers. Missguided had dismissed a concern raised by a consumer, replying via tweets that it had a fur-free policy.¹¹ TK Maxx assured a consumer that it had investigated their concern and that the item was fake fur. Sky News told us that this was not the case as it had tested the item and found that it was real fur.¹²

15. HSI UK criticised Amazon for the lack of a “substantive response” after informing the company about fake faux fur items being sold on their site.¹³ Not On The High Street expressed regret that a supplier identified as selling fake faux fur items in December 2017 had been found to be continuing the practice in April 2018.¹⁴

16. A common theme during the evidence sessions was the difficulty in distinguishing real fur from fake fur. BooHoo and Missguided told us that, following the findings of HSI UK and the media investigations, they had improved the education of their buyers and their staff.¹⁵ We were pleased to hear that House of Fraser had worked closely with HSI UK to improve awareness of the issue among their staff:

We brought not just our own brands and concessions and our own suppliers together, but we opened it up to all retailers here in the UK. We did a big session with them, so that Humane Society International could bring the expertise about this challenge in the supply chain, and bring all the toolkits of what you need to do, how you need to have better due diligence ...¹⁶

17. BooHoo and Missguided also told us that they had changed their checking processes, and increased sample testing.¹⁷

8 Qq67, 74, 79, 149, 154

9 Q4

10 Q93

11 Q15

12 Q15

13 Q11

14 Qq148, 149

15 Qq79, 88

16 Q113

17 Qq79, 88

18. Concern was expressed by witnesses about how smaller businesses and market traders would be educated on this issue. Camden Market told us that they wanted to take a proactive approach on the issue, but that it would take time to change historical behaviour.¹⁸ Staff would be trained in identifying the difference in products and “engage with tenants on a day-to-day basis”.¹⁹

19. Longer-term, House of Fraser told us that improved labelling would improve transparency in the fur industry.²⁰ We look in detail at this issue later in this Chapter.

20. It is not illegal to buy or sell fur. However, investigations over the last few years have highlighted examples where consumers, believing they are purchasing fake fur, have bought real fur.

21. Consumers should be able to have confidence in the product they are purchasing. All retailers, including online sellers and marketplace sellers, have a responsibility to ensure that they are selling items as described. We recognise that it is more difficult for online market sellers to examine all the products they sell, but that does not remove the responsibility they have to ensure that the products they sell on their site are correctly described. All retailers must comply with the law and those named in the Report have not done enough to track the risk of selling real fur accidentally. This is not something that should have been discovered by campaign organisations and the media.

22. The retail industry must not be complacent about the issue of fake faux fur. We welcome the work that has been done so far to improve the supply chain and to improve communications with online sellers, and call on the retail industry to ensure that this continues.

Trading Standards

23. Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 makes it an offence for traders to give false information about the characteristics of goods.²¹ Consumer protection is enforced by Trading standards officers, employed by local authorities.

24. We were surprised to find that retailers, on being aware of fake faux fur being sold in their establishments, had not contacted Trading Standards. Most had tried to deal with it ‘in-house’. Not On The High Street told us that they relied on the sanction of removing a seller from the site.²² Lesley Smith, Director of Public Policy, UK & Ireland, at Amazon was unable to tell us at what point of repeated offences Amazon would contact Trading Standards about a seller on their site: “We are absolutely prepared to bring in trading standards. I am sorry that that I do not know the exact threshold for that”.²³

25. Ceri Davies from Camden Market admitted that, although he had discussed other issues with Trading Standards, he had not raised the issue of fake faux fur: “I will put my hands up and say this is something that we should have done, specifically related to the tenants that were called out”.²⁴

18 Qq193, 197

19 Q198

20 Q145

21 Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, Section 5, (‘Misleading Actions’)

22 Q216

23 Q213

24 Q210

26. HSI UK were critical of the response of Trading Standards officers in dealing with fake faux fur:

We have presented evidence to Trading Standards and the responses have varied from noting it was “not a priority service area” to retailers being written to or visited, and warnings issued. We are not aware of any additional actions having taken place, such as prosecutions.²⁵

27. The Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation urged Trading Standards officers to be more proactive in conducting investigations into the mis-sale of fake faux fur.²⁶

28. Nicola Tudor, Chair of London’s Fair Trading Group,²⁷ and a Trading standards officer in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, acknowledged that she had been unaware of the issue of fake faux fur until approached by HSI UK.²⁸ This had prompted more activity from Trading Standards officers. However, due to a lack of resources for Trading Standards, she told us that fake faux fur was not a priority for many local authorities:

If you have two members of staff and roughly 200 bits of legislation that you are meant to be enforcing, then other things are very often more important, particularly locally.²⁹

29. It is illegal to give misleading information about the characteristics of goods. We are disappointed that there has been a lack of enforcement by Trading Standards officers in local authorities against those retailers responsible. The Government must ensure that local authorities are properly resourced to deliver these services.

30. We call on local authorities to ensure that Trading Standards officers enforce the law on selling fake faux fur. Where required, we call on local authorities to ensure that Trading Standards officers receive training on this issue and to conduct proactive investigations into the mis-sale of real fur as fake fur.

Labelling

31. Consumer labelling of fur is covered by the EU’s Textile Labelling Regulation.³⁰ The Regulation requires textile items containing real animal fur to carry the wording “contains non-textile parts of animal origin”.

32. Witnesses told us that the current law was not being adequately complied with. The RSPCA noted that non-compliance of fur labelling law was widespread and “indeed is worse in the UK than other Member States”.³¹ A survey by Fur Free Alliance found 93% non-compliance on the labelling rules in the UK compared to 49% non-compliance in Austria (the best performing country of the ten surveyed).³²

25 Humane Society International UK ([FUR0040](#))

26 Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation ([FUR0036](#))

27 London’s Fair Trading Group consists of Trading Standards Officers from each of the boroughs and meets on a regular basis.

28 Q219

29 Q230

30 Regulation 1007/2011

31 RSPCA ([FUR0031](#))

32 Fur Free Alliance, [Mislabelled and Mislabeled: Fur labelling problems in the EU market](#), 27 September 2017

33. HSI UK told us that the current legislation was “a minefield” and did not tell consumers what they needed to know in plain language.³³ The Regulation classifies real animal furs as “non textiles”. This puts it into the same category as any other non-textile part present, including leather, down, or a bone button. This makes it impossible to identify real fur from the label if there is another animal product present, as there is no requirement for real fur to be listed on a product’s fabric content label.

34. In addition, too many products containing real animal fur do not need to be labelled at all. Garments that are comprised of less than 80% textile fibres (i.e. more than 20% fur) fall outside the scope of the Textile Regulation, as they are no longer classified as a textile product. There is then no requirement for the label “contains non-textile parts of animal origin”. The more animal fur that is used in a garment, the less the legal requirement for it to be labelled. As HSI UK set out:

Perversely, because [the textile regulation] only applies to textile items, which have to be 80% by weight textile, if you have a full-length fur coat, you do not have to have any fur label on it, because it is a fur item, not a textile item.³⁴

35. The Regulation covers only textiles, and therefore products such as shoes, handbags and accessories, such as key rings, containing real fur are exempt from any requirement to label the fur.

36. Products sold online are also exempt from the wording requirement.

37. The overwhelming view of our witnesses was that the current legislation was “not fit for purpose”.³⁵

38. Retailers such as House of Fraser and BooHoo stated that more detailed and clearer labelling requirements for both manufacturers and suppliers would allow better traceability of fur origin and would allow consumers to make informed choices regarding purchases.³⁶ Amazon said there was a need to:

Knock out the 20% requirement. You would need to think about how you categorise what is fur and what is not. Angora at the moment is classed as wool, not fur. You would probably want to change those rules and say, “If there is any fur whatsoever, it must be identified on the product, even if it is lower than the threshold requirement at the moment”.³⁷

39. Representatives from the fur industry agreed there was a need for better labelling of fur. Michael Moser, Chief Executive Officer of British Fur Trade Association (BFTA) said that he “would not want anybody to buy a piece of fur if they truly did not wish to do that. We have enough people wanting to buy real fur. ... I will do anything I can to help people make that clear distinction”.³⁸

33 Q26

34 Q26

35 Q247

36 House of Fraser ([FUR0069](#)), BooHoo, ([FUR0066](#))

37 Q188

38 Q245

40. Many of the animal welfare charities, such as HSI UK, RSPCA, the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation, Respect for Animals and Four Paws UK, called for the Government to introduce a new mandatory labelling scheme.³⁹ Four Paws UK stated that the new labelling law should require the inclusion of product information detailing:

- a) the species from which the fur derives;
- b) the country of origin of the fur (where the animal was farmed, or hunted, or killed); and
- c) how an animal was reared and killed.⁴⁰

41. BFTA agreed that there was a need for a new labelling regime to include the species from which the fur derived, “to make it very clear and very easy for buyers”.⁴¹ But fur industry representatives were against “an overregulated labelling scheme for fur products [which] would become burdensome for the industry while not providing any added value for consumers”.⁴² BFTA did not agree that there was a need to show the country of origin, as the “vast majority of consumers would not know the welfare regulations of one country from another”.⁴³

42. The International Fur Federation told us that the fur industry was developing its own voluntary labelling scheme: FURMARK. This would be launched in 2020 and would cover all fur produced in the US, Canada and Europe, and provide clarity on the type of fur used in the product including where multiple types were used.⁴⁴

43. The Rt Hon Lord Henley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in BEIS agreed that consumers needed to be properly informed.⁴⁵ He told us that the current regulation around labelling was “confusing”⁴⁶ and admitted that his own civil servants had found it difficult to interpret the Textile Labelling Regulation.⁴⁷ The Minister told us that it was important to “get to a position where we can label in a manner that does not necessarily use the words “contains non-textile parts of animal origin””.⁴⁸

44. The Minister informed us that there were no plans to seek changes to the relevant EU regulation while the UK was still a EU Member State.⁴⁹ However, he acknowledged that there was a case for looking at the labelling regime post-Brexit and improving clarity for consumers.⁵⁰

39 Humane Society International UK ([FUR0040](#)), RSPAC ([FUR0031](#)), Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation ([FUR0036](#)), Respect for Animals ([FUR0055](#)), Four Paws UK ([FUR0041](#))

40 Four Paws UK ([FUR0041](#))

41 Q253

42 Fur Europe ([FUR0043](#))

43 Q255

44 International Fur Federation ([FUR0062](#))

45 Q318

46 Q327

47 Q317

48 Q337

49 Q366

50 Qq318, 337

45. **Consumers have a right to know what they are buying. The current EU labelling regime lacks clarity and is confusing for retailers and consumers alike. The “animal origin” label is unclear, and can refer to a number of animal products in a garment; it does not specifically identify when a product contains real animal fur. The labelling of clothes has to be consistent, transparent and customer-friendly.**

46. **We welcome the Government’s acknowledgment that the current EU labelling regime is confusing and needs amending. The Government’s ability to amend the labelling regime after Brexit will depend on the nature of the future EU-UK trading relationship.**

47. ***We recommend the introduction of a new mandatory labelling regime that identifies fur and other animal products accurately. The fur label should show the species of fur, the country of origin and method of production. We call on the Government to amend the labelling regime for products containing fur post-Brexit.***

3 Should the UK ban fur?

48. In 2017, the UK imported £63 million worth of fur and articles with fur. In the same year the UK exported £33 million worth of fur and articles with fur, suggesting that around £30 million was for UK use.⁵¹

49. Furs sold in the UK have either been farm reared, or trapped and killed. Most of the world's farmed furs are produced by European farmers. Other major producers include China, the Baltic States, and the U.S.

50. Fur farming was banned in the UK in 2000. However, as mentioned earlier in this Report, it is legal to import and sell fur from a range of species such as fox, rabbit, mink, coyote, racoon dog and chinchilla. EU regulations ban trade in fur from domestic cats, dogs or commercial seal hunts. In January 2018, George Eustice MP, Minister of State for Farming, Food and the Marine Environment in Defra, stated that the Government intended to retain the ban on the production, marketing, importation and exportation of products containing cat and dog fur in the UK, and seal skins and products.⁵²

51. Animal welfare organisations have for many years called for a ban on the commercial import of all animal fur. In 2017, India introduced a ban on the import of mink, fox and chinchilla. Individual cities have also introduced bans on the sale of fur, including Sao Paulo in Brazil, Berkeley, San Francisco and West Hollywood in the United States.

52. In recent years a number of fashion designers, such as Hugo Boss, Armani, Gucci, Versace, Tommy Hilfiger, Donna Karan, Jimmy Choo and Stella McCartney, have all banned fur from their products.

53. During the inquiry, we took evidence on the possibility of a ban on the import and sale of all fur in the UK post-Brexit.

54. BFTA told us that there was growing support for fur sales on the high street. Fur also remained popular with fashion students and BFTA was currently working with students in 14 fashion college and universities across the UK.⁵³

55. Fur Europe recognised that consumers were concerned about animal welfare in the fur industry.⁵⁴ The WelFur certification programme, initiated in 2009, is a farm level certification scheme introduced by the European fur sector. In order to participate in the WelFur certification programme, farmers have to fulfil industry minimum standards.

56. In order to be WelFur certified, each farm undergoes three different third-party visits in the three main stages of a mink and fox life: winter, pregnancy and birth (spring/summer), and adulthood (autumn). Fur Europe explained the evaluation procedure:

In each visit 22 measurements for mink and 25 measurements for fox will be evaluated by the inspectors, based on 12 animal welfare criteria regrouped under 4 main principles: good health, good feed, good housing, and

51 PQ 157157 [on Furs: Imports], 29 June 2018

52 PQ 122156 [on Furs: Import controls], 16 January 2018

53 British Fur Trade Association ([FUR0053](#))

54 Q256

appropriate behaviour. Moreover, fur farms aiming to obtain the WelFur certification will also have to respect the industry minimum standards on cage sizes ...

Based on this evaluation, every farm will be classified according to a four-category scoring system: best, good, acceptable, and unacceptable farm practices. Farms falling under the fourth category will not be able to obtain the certification. Each certified farm will also submit to a yearly visit by WelFur-trained assessors during a random period in order to maintain their WelFur status.⁵⁵

The aim was to assess all the approximately 4,000 fox and mink farms established in Europe by December 2019.⁵⁶

57. In the evidence session, BFTA discussed the perceived low standards of fur farms in China. It told us that the welfare regulations in the “vast majority” of Chinese farms were very good.⁵⁷ The International Fur Federation noted that the State Forestry Administration, the body responsible for farming in China, was “putting in place the standards that link in to the Council of Europe”.⁵⁸ It did acknowledge concerns about the level of inspection in China.⁵⁹

58. HSI UK told us that many animals reared for fur were kept in wire cages and were denied critical natural behaviours such as, in the case of mink, swimming. We heard that investigations in countries such as China, France and Poland had demonstrated the cruelty of the fur trade: “fur farms routinely lead to animals enduring physical suffering, and denial of animals’ key behavioural needs and positive social interactions leads to psychological suffering”.⁶⁰

59. HSI UK were extremely critical of any welfare scheme initiated by the fur industry:

High-welfare fur farming is basically an oxymoron. ... You only have to scrape the surface of these assurance schemes ... to find that they do not offer any meaningful welfare provisions for the animals on these farms. While the livestock farming sector globally, following the European and UK lead, is moving away from the cage age, the fur farming industry is standing by it, almost as a badge of honour. It is absolutely not willing to do anything to make these animals’ lives slightly less miserable.⁶¹

60. HSI UK told us that there was a ‘moral inconsistency’ between the UK’s ban on fur farming and the importation of fur:

55 Fur Europe ([FUR0043](#))

56 Fur Europe ([FUR0043](#))

57 Q237

58 Q239. The Council of Europe has issued recommendations and guidelines concerning animal welfare. The EU is a signatory to the European Convention for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, adopted by the Council of Europe.

59 Q239

60 Humane Society International UK ([FUR0040](#))

61 Q42

We are effectively outsourcing our animal cruelty. We have said we do not want it in our own backyard, because it is nasty and people do not agree with it, but we are going to pay people in China, Finland and Poland to do it. We are still paying for that same cruelty, and that is not acceptable.⁶²

61. Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in Defra, told us that the UK Government believed in “an adherence to humane standards, whether it is in trapping or in fur farming”.⁶³ He noted that “it [was] incumbent on the fur industry to be looking to raise standards so that those who wish to have real fur can also feel confident that the animals have been reared and farmed and indeed killed in a humane manner”.⁶⁴

62. Lord Gardiner highlighted the role that the UK had to play in advancing animal welfare issues globally.⁶⁵ He told us that “Different countries are at different places in what I call this journey about recognising the place of animals and their use and the respect for animals”.⁶⁶

63. The Government’s ability to restrict imports after Brexit will depend on the nature of the future EU-UK trading relationship. The UK Government has recently confirmed⁶⁷ that trading under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules would not preclude the UK Government from taking stances on ethical grounds and from advancing animal welfare.⁶⁸

64. When asked whether there should be a ban of fur in the UK, Lord Henley replied that the fur industry was a legitimate business and he did “not do bans”.⁶⁹ Lord Gardiner told us that it was a matter for consumer choice as to whether they wished to wear fur or not, and that it was important to ensure that there were the correct provenance and assurance schemes in place.⁷⁰

65. We recognise that the breeding and sale of fur is a very emotive subject. As well as presenting the moral arguments against fur farming, animal welfare campaigners highlight the conditions in which animals are reared, and their lack of natural behaviour. The fur industry, to counter these concerns, have established assurance schemes to ensure that animals are bred and raised to industry standards, although there are concerns as to whether these standards go far enough.

66. We recommend that the Government holds a public consultation to consider whether to ban fur. In looking at whether to ban the sale and import of fur post-Brexit, the Government will have to balance the needs of animal welfare against consumer choice.

62 Q47

63 Q370

64 Q370

65 Q321

66 Q374

67 HC Debate, 4 June 2018 col 31WH

68 In EC-Seal Products, the WTO Appellate Body ruled that in the EU (and therefore in the UK) animal welfare is a concern that comes within the field of public morals. WTO dispute panels and the Appellate Body have stated on several occasions that WTO member countries have the right to determine the level of protection that they consider appropriate to achieve a given policy aim for example as regards public health, conservation, prevention of deceptive practices or public morals.

69 Q381

70 Q386

4 Conclusion

67. Many consumers have an ethical reason for not buying garments containing real fur. The last few years have shown that there is a vulnerability in retailers' supply chains and that real fur has been sold as fake fur.

68. Our inquiry has highlighted that the current labelling system is confusing, not-fit-for purpose, and with a high degree of non-compliance. It is also not being enforced. A new UK labelling scheme would bring clarity and consistency to consumers and retailers alike. The Government must look at the opportunities that are available post-Brexit.

69. Longer-term, the Government will have the opportunity to decide whether to ban the sale of fur. We understand that this is a subject that raises strong feelings. The Government must balance consumer choice against animal welfare considerations, and we expect Ministers to listen carefully to all sides in any consultation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Mis-selling of real fur as fake fur

Retailers

1. It is not illegal to buy or sell fur. However, investigations over the last few years have highlighted examples where consumers, believing they are purchasing fake fur, have bought real fur. (Paragraph 20)
2. Consumers should be able to have confidence in the product they are purchasing. All retailers, including online sellers and marketplace sellers, have a responsibility to ensure that they are selling items as described. We recognise that it is more difficult for online market sellers to examine all the products they sell, but that does not remove the responsibility they have to ensure that the products they sell on their site are correctly described. All retailers must comply with the law and those named in the Report have not done enough to track the risk of selling real fur accidentally. This is not something that should have been discovered by campaign organisations and the media. (Paragraph 21)
3. The retail industry must not be complacent about the issue of fake faux fur. We welcome the work that has been done so far to improve the supply chain and to improve communications with online sellers, and call on the retail industry to ensure that this continues. (Paragraph 22)

Trading standards

4. It is illegal to give misleading information about the characteristics of goods. We are disappointed that there has been a lack of enforcement by Trading Standards officers in local authorities against those retailers responsible. The Government must ensure that local authorities are properly resourced to deliver these services. (Paragraph 29)
5. *We call on local authorities to ensure that Trading Standards officers enforce the law on selling fake faux fur. Where required, we call on local authorities to ensure that Trading Standards officers receive training on this issue and to conduct proactive investigations into the mis-sale of real fur as fake fur* (Paragraph 30)

Labelling

6. Consumers have a right to know what they are buying. The current EU labelling regime lacks clarity and is confusing for retailers and consumers alike. The “animal origin” label is unclear, and can refer to a number of animal products in a garment; it does not specifically identify when a product contains real animal fur. The labelling of clothes has to be consistent, transparent and customer-friendly. (Paragraph 45)
7. We welcome the Government’s acknowledgment that the current EU labelling regime is confusing and needs amending. The Government’s ability to amend the labelling regime after Brexit will depend on the nature of the future EU-UK trading relationship. (Paragraph 46)

8. *We recommend the introduction of a new mandatory labelling regime that identifies fur and other animal products accurately. The fur label should show the species of fur, the country of origin and method of production. We call on the Government to amend the labelling regime for products containing fur post-Brexit. (Paragraph 47)*

Should the UK ban fur?

9. We recognise that the breeding and sale of fur is a very emotive subject. As well as presenting the moral arguments against fur farming, animal welfare campaigners highlight the conditions in which animals are reared, and their lack of natural behaviour. The fur industry, to counter these concerns, have established assurance schemes to ensure that animals are bred and raised to industry standards, although there are concerns as to whether these standards go far enough. (Paragraph 65)
10. *We recommend that the Government holds a public consultation to consider whether to ban fur. In looking at whether to ban the sale and import of fur post-Brexit, the Government will have to balance the needs of animal welfare against consumer choice. (Paragraph 66)*

Formal minutes

Wednesday 18 July 2018

Members present:

Neil Parish, in the Chair

Kerry McCarthy David Simpson

Draft Report *Fur trade in the UK*, proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 69 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Seventh Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 5 September at 9.15 am

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 7 March 2018

Claire Bass, Executive Director, Humane Society International UK;
Alex Bushill, News Correspondent, BBC London News; **Sarah Hajibagheri**,
Reporter, Sky News

[Q1–63](#)

Neil Hackett, Interim Supply Chain Director, Missguided; **Paul Horsfield**,
Merchandising Director, BooHoo; **Dorothy Maxwell**, Head of
Sustainability, House of Fraser

[Q64–145](#)

Wednesday 18 April 2018

Ceri Davies, Operations Director, Camden Market; **Lesley Smith**, Director
Public Policy, UK & Ireland, Amazon; **Kate Burns**, General Counsel, Not on
the High Street; **Nicola Tudor**, Trading Standards, LB Tower Hamlets

[Q146–234](#)

Mette Lykke Nielsen, Chief Executive Officer, Fur Europe; **Michael Moser**,
Chief Executive Officer, British Fur Trade Association; **Mark Oaten**, Chief
Executive Officer, International Fur Federation

[Q235–314](#)

Wednesday 25 April 2018

Rt Hon Lord Henley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department
for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; **Beth Martin**, Deputy Director,
Consumer and Competition Directorate, Department for Business,
Energy and Industrial Strategy; **Lord Gardiner**, Parliamentary Under
Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
Marc Casale, Deputy Director, Animal Health and Welfare, Department
for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

[Q315–403](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

FUR numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Animal Defenders International ([FUR0058](#))
- 2 Animal Interfaith Alliance ([FUR0038](#))
- 3 BBC London News ([FUR0034](#))
- 4 BEIS ([FUR0073](#))
- 5 BEIS ([FUR0076](#))
- 6 BEIS and Defra ([FUR0067](#))
- 7 Boohoo ([FUR0066](#))
- 8 British Fur Trade Association ([FUR0053](#))
- 9 British Retail Consortium ([FUR0063](#))
- 10 Cats Protection ([FUR0039](#))
- 11 Coalition to Abolish the Fur Trade ([FUR0042](#))
- 12 Compassion in World Farming ([FUR0056](#))
- 13 Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation ([FUR0036](#))
- 14 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). ([FUR0074](#))
- 15 Essex Business School, University of Essex, UK ([FUR0075](#))
- 16 Four Paws UK ([FUR0041](#))
- 17 Fur Europe ([FUR0043](#))
- 18 Fur Europe ([FUR0071](#))
- 19 Hans Ng ([FUR0005](#))
- 20 House of Fraser ([FUR0069](#))
- 21 Humane Society International ([FUR0040](#))
- 22 International Fur Federation ([FUR0062](#))
- 23 Janet Lord ([FUR0010](#))
- 24 June Bostock, Anna Brewer, Kim Carney, Dawn Geatches, Caroline Harrap, Michelle Hayward, Anne Marie Hewitt, Hurrem Mehmet, Paul Metcalf, Tameka Murrain, Angela Phoenix, Kathryn Pike, Susie Reynolds, Ingrid Richardson, Line Ringgaard, Debbi James Saunders, Anthony Scoffield, Patricia Scoffield, Shirley Swan, Angeline Tabbada, Linda Ticehurst, Cristina Usuga, Dr Amanda Vance, Dr Karen White, Clarice Wilby ([FUR0002](#))
- 25 Marian Hussenbux ([FUR0023](#))
- 26 Miss Catherine Reda ([FUR0046](#))
- 27 Miss Joanne Nosworthy ([FUR0044](#))
- 28 Miss Kerry Barlow ([FUR0047](#))
- 29 Miss N Macdonald ([FUR0045](#))

- 30 Missguided ([FUR0064](#))
- 31 Mr Luke Steele ([FUR0059](#))
- 32 Mrs Arabelle Hurlstone ([FUR0037](#))
- 33 Mrs Denise Lysaght ([FUR0026](#))
- 34 Mrs Diane Smith ([FUR0030](#))
- 35 Mrs Gina Chron ([FUR0054](#))
- 36 Ms Chantal Cooke ([FUR0022](#))
- 37 Ms Desiree Silverstone ([FUR0035](#))
- 38 Ms Heidi-Lauren O'Donnell ([FUR0051](#))
- 39 Ms Kate Young ([FUR0068](#))
- 40 Natassija Watson ([FUR0027](#))
- 41 Notonthehighstreet ([FUR0070](#))
- 42 Peter Sharp ([FUR0057](#))
- 43 Quaker Concern for Animals ([FUR0048](#))
- 44 Respect for Animals ([FUR0055](#))
- 45 RSPCA ([FUR0031](#))
- 46 TK Maxx ([FUR0061](#))
- 47 UK Animal Rights Protests ([FUR0052](#))
- 48 Victoria Colewood ([FUR0001](#))
- 49 Vintage Fur Hire ([FUR0060](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2017–19

First Report	2 Sisters and Standards in Poultry Processing	HC 490
Second Report	Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the draft Animal Welfare (Sentencing and Recognition of Sentience) Bill 2017	HC 709
Third Report	Brexit: Trade in Food	HC 348
Fourth Report	Improving air quality	HC 433
Fifth Report	Performance of the Rural Payments Agency	HC 887
Sixth Report	The future for food, farming and the environment	HC 870
First Special Report	Food waste in England: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 444
Second Special Report	Forestry in England: Seeing the wood for the trees: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 445
Third Special Report	Feeding the nation: labour constraints: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016–17	HC 446
Fourth Special Report	Post-legislative scrutiny: Flood and Water Management Act 2010: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 447
Fifth Special Report	2 Sisters and Standards in Poultry Processing: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 772
Sixth Special Report	2 Sisters and Standards in Poultry Processing: Food Standards Agency Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 861
Seventh Special Report	Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the draft Animal Welfare (Sentencing and Recognition of Sentience) Bill 2017: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 984
Eighth Special Report	Brexit: Trade in Food: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1021
Ninth Special Report	2 Sisters and Standards in Poultry Processing: Food Standards Agency Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 1070
Tenth Special Report	Improving air quality: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1149