



Fur farming and certification of Finnish fur farms

Fur farms in Finland

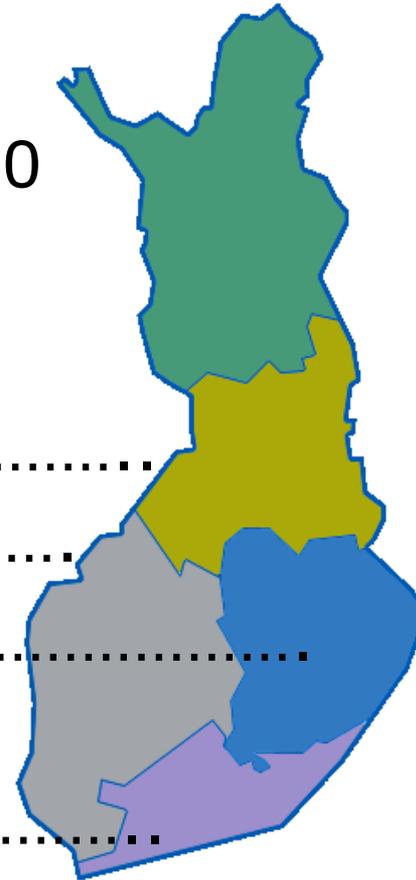
Tot. 950 farms, approx. 800
fox producing farms

Northern Finland 7,2 %

Ostrobothnia 89,6 %

Eastern Finland 2,3 %

Southern Finland
0,9 %



Farmed foxes

- Farmed foxes are domesticated, and their behaviour and appearance differ from their wild relatives’.
- According to Finnish legislation it is forbidden to take any wild animals from the nature to farm.
- There are different colour types of farmed foxes



Farmed fox: blue fox

- Farmed blue foxes descend from mated Alaska and Greenland blue foxes. It is a bluish-grey variant of the arctic fox.
- Blue fox breeding began in Finland in the 1920s and it is nowadays the most common fur animal farmed in Finland.

Size

- In the summer, a full-grown female weighs 7–8 kg and male 9–10 kg. In the autumn, blue foxes weigh more than 10 kg.
- The length of the body from snout to the start of the tail is 65–72 cm



Farmed fox: shadow fox

- Farmed blue foxes can also be partly or entirely white; depending on their genotype, these variants are called white or shadow foxes.
- There are often both blue and white puppies in the same litter when having shadow x blue mating
- The fur coat of the blue and shadow fox is very soft and dense



Farmed fox: silver fox

- Silver fox is a pioneer in the fur farming – the vast popularity of silver fox pelts was a major incentive for starting fur farming in the first place.
- In Finland, the breeding of silver foxes began as early as 1910's .
- Silver fox is a silver-toned variant of red fox.

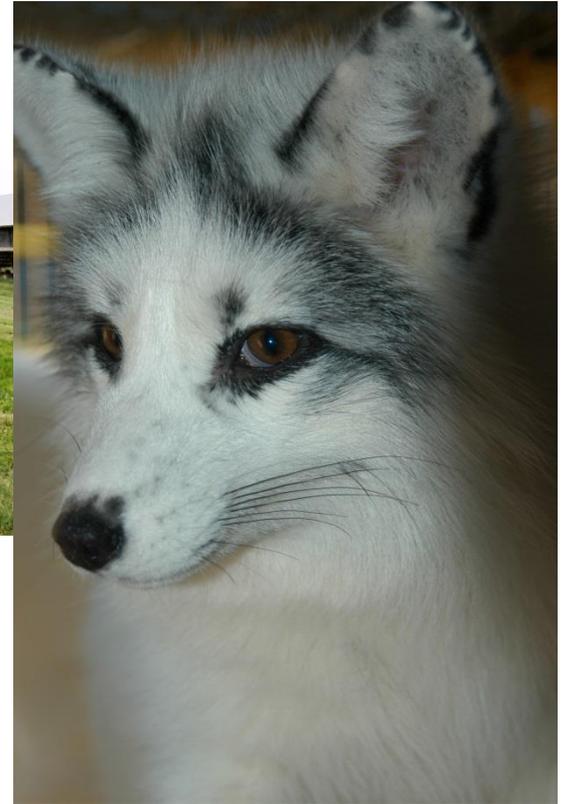
Size

- A full-grown female weighs 4.5–6 kg and male 6–7 kg, in the autumn, the largest ones can weigh 9–10 kg.
- The length of the body from snout to the start of the tail is 63–70 cm





Farmed fox: different colour types



Farmed finnraconoon

- Farming began 1970s. Today, Finland is the biggest producer of Finnraconoon pelts in the world.
- The colour of fur varies
- Farmed Finnraconoons do not hibernate as in the wild

Size

- The weight varies from 6–8 kg in the summer to over 10 kg in the winter
- The length of a full-grown Finnraconoon is 64–66 cm





Farmed mink

- One of the most important and highly valued fur animals in the world
- originates from North America, where its farming began in the late 1880s.
- The first mink were brought to Finland in the 1920s, but actual mink farming began in the 1930s.
- Farmed minks are domesticated, and their behaviour and appearance differ from their wild relatives'. According to Finnish legislation it is forbidden to take any wild animals from the nature to farm.

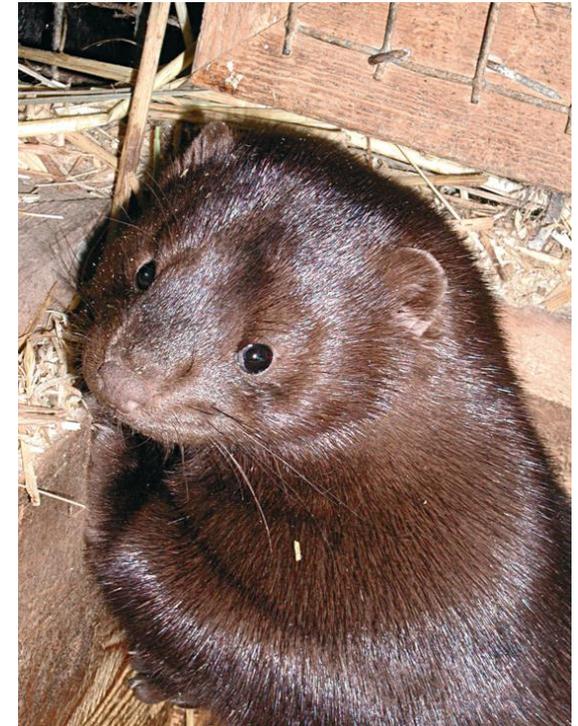
- **Size**

- Sexes differ in size: females weigh 1–1.5 kg and males 2–3 kg
- The length of the body from snout to the start of the tail: males approx. 44 cm, females 38 cm





There are various color types of mink





Prohibiting farmed animals from escaping to the nature

- Legislation: the farm must be fenced in, or all of the shelter buildings should be escape-proof.
- The wire mesh size is determined
- A metal sheet is needed on the top of the wire mesh fence to prevent climbing of minks





Farming area and housing environment

- A new farming area needs an environmental permit handled by authorities (the aim is to breed fur animals in a way where the farm activity puts as little load as possible on the local environment)
- Housing: one aisle shelter houses are the most common systems
- Halls: multi-row system





Cages

- Size requirements and the number of animals that can be reared in the same cage is determined by legislation
- Cages have wire mesh bottom for reasons related to the animals' health (droppings and urine do not infect animals).
- Environmental protection: water-tight coating under the shelter house, the manure is not in contact with rain or melt water

	Bottom size (m ²)
Grown-up fox	0,8
Dam with puppies	2,0
Two weaned puppies	1,2

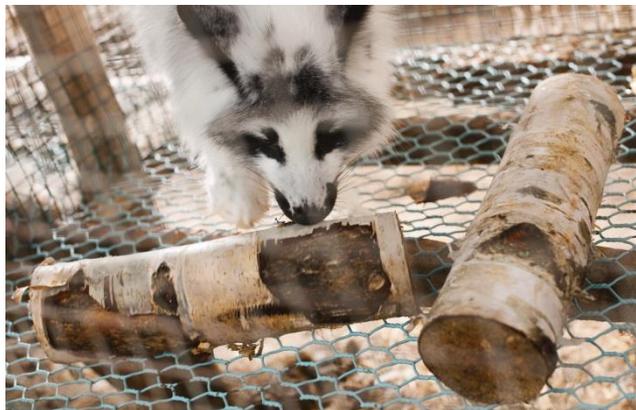
If there are more than two weaned puppies in the same cage there should be extra space for each puppy of at least 0,5 m².

Height of the cage min. 70 cm



Cages

- The cages have items for sense-stimulation of the animals (e.g. resting shelves and chewing sticks/blocks)
- Animals have social contact during rearing. Kits/pups are kept alone in their own cages only in case of sickness.
- Full-grown animals that have not been reared together may not be placed in the same space without appropriate monitoring.



Nest boxes

- All minks have year-round bedded nest boxes (picture below)
- Foxes have two-part nest boxes during breeding time
- The cages have items for sense-stimulation of the animals.
- Animals have social contact during rearing. Kits/pups are kept alone in their own cages only in case of sickness.





The annual cycle of a fox farm

- Fur farms have a certain annual cycle: some tasks are repeated year round as a everyday routine (e.g. feeding animals and changing bedding in nest boxes), and some are carried out only at a certain time of the year (e.g. reproduction, weaning of kits, grading, pelting)



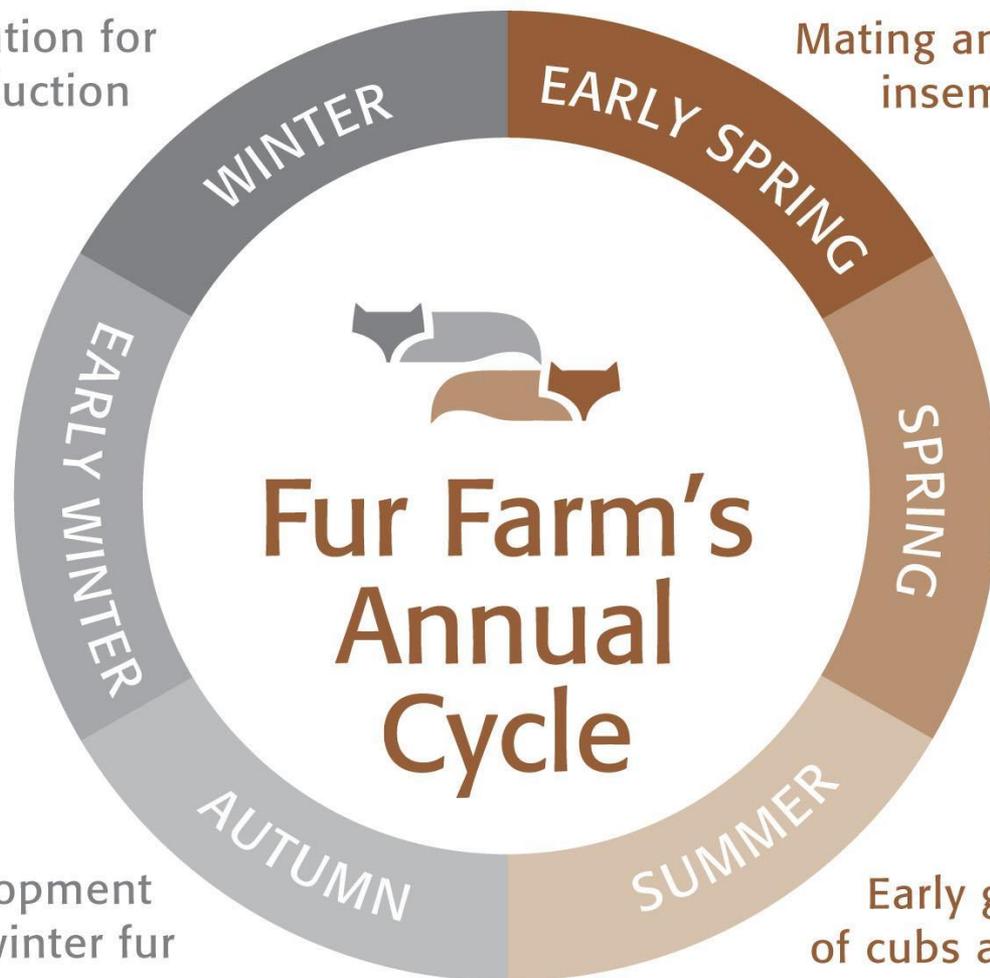


Preparation for new production

Pelting and selection of breeding animals



Development of winter fur



Mating and artificial insemination



Whelping



Early growth of cubs and kits



Certification of Finnish fur farms producing Saga Furs®

- Started in year 2005
- The certification is based on the transparency and documentation of production
- The aim of certification is to improve animal welfare on farms by keeping farming standards on a high level
- Helps the farmer to develop his work
- A fur farm that has received farm-specific certification must fulfil requirements that are stricter than those set by current legislation.
- The certificate is valid for three years, after that a new audit with updated criteria is needed.





Certification of Finnish fur farms producing Saga Furs®

- Started in year 2005
- Aim of certification is to improve animal welfare on farms by keeping farming standards on a high level
- Helps the farmer to develop his work
- Gives FFBA useful information
- Today

Certified	%	No. of farms or breeding females
Farms	92 %	851
Fox production	99 %	478.100
Finraccoon product.	99 %	24.100
Mink production	90 %	379.300



ProFur

Certification process



- 7 trained auditors (professional fur farming advisors)
- Farmer contacts an auditor or auditor asks the farmer for a permission to visit his farm
- paperwork, animals and farming conditions are checked -> documentation -> conclusions -> quality
- Auditor makes own notes + document with possible faults and dead lines (re-auditing within a certain time) -> audit report signed by auditor and farmer
- A farm has to fulfill all the criteria



Certification process continues...(2)

- Auditors send reports to FFBA -> up to date register of certificated farms together with FFBA and Saga Furs Oyj
- The certificate is valid for three years -> new audit with updated criteria
- Auditors have their own meetings monthly -> all have the same view of the criteria
- Training courses for auditors



Certification process continues...(3)

- Yearly 10 % of randomly picked certificated farms are inspected during the validation time. Farm has to fulfil the requirements throughtout the validity period.
- If a certified farm leases additional farming area elsewhere, the new area needs auditing and has to fulfil all the criteria
- Legislation and instructions from the authorities as framework





The Council of Europe Recommendations + the National Legislation = Minimum Standards

- **Coming in the near future:** new fur animal protection and animal protection act
- **Animal Protection Act** Eläinsuojelulaki [247/1996](#), F 1:1 [1194/1996](#), F 1:2 [594/1998](#), F 1:3 [662/1999](#), F 1:4 [891/2001](#), F 1:5 [220/2003](#) ja eläinsuojeluasetus 396/1996
- **Fur Animal Protection** Turkiseläinten pidolle asetettavat eläinsuojeluvaatimukset MMMp [16/EEO/1999](#)
- **Transportation of live animals** Asetus eläinten kuljetuksesta [491/96](#), F 3:1 [1398/1997](#), F 3:2 [955/1998](#)
- **Dispatching of animals** Neuvoston asetus (EY) 1099/2009 eläinten suojelusta lopetuksen yhteydessä
- **Animal diseases** Eläintautilaki 55/1980 ja -asetus 602/1980, Laki eläinten lääkitsemisestä [617/1997](#) B5:1 [671/1999](#), B5:2 [893 osa/2001](#), B 5:3 [413/2002](#)
- **Medicine** Lääkkeiden käyttö, luovutus ja määrääminen eläinlääkinnässä MMMa [23/EEO/2002](#) B 17:5 [16/EEO/2002](#), Lääkerekohdanne MMMp [13/EEO/1998](#)
- **Feeds** Rehulaki [396/1998](#), Turkiseläinten rehun eläintauti- ja hygieniavaatimukset, MMMa 34/EEO/2001, Asetus rehualan toiminnanharjoittamisesta MMMa [20/2001](#)
- **Breeding** Kotieläinjalostuslaki (794/1993), Päätös eläinten keinollisen lisäämisen harjoittamisen edellytyksistä MMMp22/00
- Luonnonsuojelulaki 1096/1998



The main areas of certification criterias

1. Well-being and health of the animals
2. Conditions for rearing animals
3. Feeds and feeding methods
4. Breeding
5. Environmental management
6. Farm hygiene
7. Training and preparing for exceptional situations

Well-being and health of animals

- Plasmacytosis is controlled through testing (minks)
- Spreading of infectious diseases is controlled
- The farm complies with the vaccination recommendations of FFBA
- The health of the animals is monitored daily (documentation!)
- The fur animals are dispatched at the home farm



Conditions for rearing animals

Aim: a safe cage environment corresponding each breeding stage

- The rearing environment is safe for the animals
- Special arrangements during the whelping season (nest boxes, space area etc.)
- The animals have social contacts (important for cubs)
- Demands of the Animal Protection Act





Feeds and feeding methods

- The composition of the animal feed complies with the recommendations of the FFBA (regular monitoring of the feed quality, laboratory tests)
- Domestic feed products are favored
- Feed storages (silos)
- Documentation: way-bills, feed quantity, temperature etc.





Breeding

- Focus on animals (health, behaviour, handling, human contacts...)
- Insemination of foxes
- Animal sales
- No hormone or artificial treatments to animals



Environmental management

The aim is to breed fur animals in a way where the farm activity puts as little load as possible on the local environment.

- Valid environmental permit
- Removing, composting and using of manure
- The waste of the farm is sorted



Farm hygiene

- Maintaining good hygiene
- Cleaning of feed distribution equipment
- Handling carcasses (pelting carcasses and animals that have died of natural causes)
- The waste of the farm is sorted
- The overall impression of farm





Training and preparing for exceptional situations

- Readiness to operate under various emergency conditions
- Important contact information collected
- Orientation of new employees
- Fur farmer participates in training





In the future...

- Moving from second-party certification to third-party certification (DNV, ISO 9001:1)
- health care system for fur animals (Fureva) -> integration to farm certification?
- The European-wide implementation of the fur animal welfare programme WelFur-> integration to farm certification?
- New certification criteria (focus? ..)



WelFur

Our future, our reputation



Challenges...

- Expensive foodstuffs
- New farmers into the trade
- Political preassure
- Enviromental and physical limitation
- Finance
- International markets
- Skilled workers
- Health (plasmcytosis)

• <http://vimeo.com/user9512294/review/51285121/77e8e76046>