



Finnish Fur Breeders' Association – FIFUR
Press release

31.8.2023

Fur breeders invest in biosecurity, stop blaming the producers

FIFURs' member breeders continue to improve biosecurity and bird control by all appropriate means in cooperation with the authorities. The risk of avian influenza can be averted, and fur farming continues safely in Finland. In recent weeks, fur breeders and the industry have been heavily accused. FIFUR stresses that infections are not caused by the fur industry and calls for a discussion on the real causes of avian influenza.

"This year, the scale and intensity of avian influenza have come as a surprise worldwide, and it has not been possible to be fully prepared for the outbreaks. During the debate of the past weeks, the problem of avian influenza has entirely been blamed on the fur industry. However, the truth is that the threat posed by the virus, which spreads unhindered in wild bird populations, will not be eliminated by the cessation of fur farming", says **Marja Tiura**, CEO of FIFUR.

The widespread avian influenza in wild birds and the threat it poses to us all should be the subject of a wider societal debate and an end to the unilateral accusations against fur breeders.

Tiura and **Jussi Peura**, Research Director at FIFUR, point out that there is a false public perception that no bird control has been carried out on fur farms and farms have not been prepared.

"We have always been committed to biosecurity and the birds are pests on farms. In the fight against coronavirus, we managed very well and kept the coronavirus away from fur farms as the only country in Europe. We also developed an animal vaccine against coronavirus together with a team of scientists. The risk of avian influenza can also be contained", says Tiura.

Most fur farms in Finland are protected so that there is no contact between birds and fur animals. Mink farms in particular have traditionally been well protected due to other production diseases occurring in minks. However, as there is always room for improvement, even before the outbreak of the avian influenza epidemic, attention has been paid to bird control in farm certification and advice within the industry.

"In terms of bird control, the farms have traditionally used bird nets, lines, and wires, as well as other protective structures and measures, such as gas cannons. During the summer epidemic, the effectiveness of bird control has been highlighted as one of the main objectives of FIFUR and fur farms. But it is very difficult to keep the birds away from farms," says Jussi Peura.

The authorities manage the situation, FIFUR's role is to advise and support producers

In Finland, the authorities are responsible for the control of avian influenza and for communicating the disease situation. An updated view of the situation can be found on the Finnish Food Authority's [website](#). FIFUR is responsible for advising producers in terms of personal protection and bird control, supporting producers' mental health and communicating towards producers in cooperation with the authorities.

"The authority's decisions in a case concerning avian influenza have been well thought out and necessary to avert the risk of disease. Of course, the measures are very hard for the farms and

farmers to whom they apply. Most importantly, the measures must be proportionate to the risks identified”, say Tiura and Peura.

In addition to the work on biosecurity, FIFUR will concentrate in the coming weeks on supporting producers who have been ordered to cull animals. Currently (on 30.8.2023) there are 25 infected farms and 14 farms have been ordered to cull animals as a prevention measure, which is about 120 000 animals. As a proportion, FIFUR has about 400 active member companies and the farms currently have around 1,3 million minks, foxes and Finn raccoons.

“Decisions on the culling of animals have been issued to long-standing family businesses which lose decades of quality work. Quality work and breeding cannot be estimated economically, it takes a long time to reach the corresponding level. The compensation under the Animal Diseases Act shall be such that the farm can continue. Farmers who have been ordered to cull animals can earn income from fur sales at the earliest at the auctions in 2025”, Tiura and Peura point out.

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The Finnish Fur Breeders' Association – FIFUR is the parent association of the fur industry and the lobbying and training organization of its members. Professional fur animal husbandry has been practiced in Finland for over a hundred years and the association was founded in 1928. FIFUR and its member associations own the majority of the Finnish marketing and auction company Saga Furs Plc. Finland's fur industry is a pioneer in certification worldwide. The objective of the voluntary quality system, launched in 2005, is to maintain and improve the welfare of animals reared on Finnish fur farms, the quality of production and the professional skills of fur farmers.