



Adam Jogee MP

Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Cc Andrew Gwynne MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Department of Health and Social Care

Cc The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP
Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security

Cc Baroness Hayman of Ullock
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
(Sent via email)

22 January 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

We write to express our concern regarding the publication of new evidence underscoring the significant public health risk posed by fur farms, and to state our support for Ruth Jones MP's [Fur \(Import and Sales\) Bill](#), which will advance both public health and animal welfare.

In 2000, the UK became the first country in the world to ban fur farming on the basis of the extreme animal suffering involved. But by allowing tens of millions of pounds of fur to be imported to the UK each year we are engaging in a double standard. We are outsourcing suffering.

The fur trade is not only an affront to animal welfare, recent scientific investigations demonstrate that this industry presents a very serious risk to public health. Eminent virologists, including from the Department of Infectious Disease at Imperial College London,¹ have recently issued grave warnings that the species involved and the conditions typical on fur farms make the practice highly conducive to the creation and spread of novel pathogens, and concluded that fur farming “increase[s] the likelihood of future pandemics.”²

With significant concern we bring to your attention a study published in *Nature* in September 2024 reporting on viruses found on Chinese fur farms.³ In tests of over 400 tissue samples from fur farmed animals, 39 viruses were identified as a ‘high-risk’ for the potential to spread to humans, including 13 potentially high-risk *novel* viruses. The authors flag particular alarm over the discovery of bat coronavirus HKU5-like viruses in two farmed mink. Professor Edward Holmes of the University of Sydney, author on the study, described the fur trade as ‘a roll of the dice’ and concluded that fur farms present a ‘clear epidemic or pandemic risk’ and ‘an obvious route [for the] next pandemic to occur.’⁴

¹ Mink farming poses risks for future viral pandemics, Thomas P. Peacock, Wendy S. Barclay, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 120, July 2023: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/epdf/10.1073/pnas.2303408120>

² Mink farming poses risks for future viral pandemics, Thomas P. Peacock, Wendy S. Barclay, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 120, July 2023: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/epdf/10.1073/pnas.2303408120>

³ Farmed fur animals harbour viruses with zoonotic spillover potential. Zhao et al. *Nature*, 4 September 2024: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-024-07901-3.epdf>

⁴ Dangerous new coronavirus is one of more than 30 pathogens found in new study of Chinese fur farms. *Telegraph*, 4 September 2024. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/dangerous-new-coronavirus-is-one-of-more-than-30-pathogens/>

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There have already been outbreaks of Covid-19 and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) (H5N1) on 540 European fur farms, leading to the killing of some 20 million animals on public health grounds.⁵ Such outbreaks have led to closure or curtailment of fur farming in the Netherlands, Italy and Denmark. However, fur farming has been allowed to continue in certain countries including Finland, Greece, the United States, China and Poland. Other than in Finland, where the most recent HPAI outbreaks have occurred, there is no mandatory testing for zoonotic diseases on fur farms.

The fur trade appears to be an industry in terminal decline, with global production having fallen from 140 million animals in 2014 to around 20 million animals in 2023.⁶ Over 20 countries have now banned fur farming and other countries, states and cities have banned fur sales. While we are aware that the Animal Welfare Committee is currently working on a report considering responsible sourcing of fur, we note that any deliberation on 'responsible sourcing' will be incomplete unless it also considers the government's responsibility to protect the public from future pandemics. The public health risk posed by the fur trade commands serious and urgent attention and action by the UK Government; we must cease trading in this high-risk commodity.

It would greatly assist in taking forward Ruth Jones' bill if the Government could publish findings from Defra's 2021 Call for Evidence on the Fur Market in Great Britain.

A UK ban on fur imports and sales would send an extremely important global message to those nations still engaged in cruel and dangerous fur farming that protecting public health and animal welfare are more important than fur fashion.

Thank you for your and your department's attention to this matter.

Adam Jogee MP (Labour)

Richard Baker MP (Labour)

Bob Blackman MP (Conservative)

Chris Bloore MP (Labour)

Ian Byrne MP (Labour)

Irene Campbell MP (Labour)

Alistair Carmichael MP (Lib Dem)

Sarah Champion MP (Labour)

Daisy Cooper MP (Lib Dem)

Steve Darling MP (Lib Dem)

Caroline Dinenage MP (Conservative)

Dave Doogan MP (SNP)

Peter Dowd MP (Labour)

Rosie Duffield (Independent)

Neil Duncan-Jordan MP (Labour)

Sarah Dyke MP (Lib Dem)

⁵ Highly pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N1) virus infection in farmed minks, Spain, October 2022. Agüero et al. Eurosurveillance. January 2023. <https://www.eurosurveillance.org/docserver/fulltext/eurosurveillance/28/3/eurosurv-28-3-2.pdf> European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC): Drivers for a pandemic due to avian influenza and options for One Health mitigation measures. 3 April 2024: <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.8735>

⁶ <https://www.hsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/HSIUK-Fur-Economic-Decline.pdf>

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Maya Ellis MP (Labour)

Tim Farron (Lib Dem)

Terry Jermy MP (Labour)

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