

Warrant Article #15

Fur Free Arlington FAQ*

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Local Impact and Background Information

Q: What economic impact will a fur ban have on Arlington's businesses?

A: There are no retail stores in Arlington that currently sell new finished fur therefore there are no stores that this bylaw will economically impact. There is one second hand store that may sell fur products however they are exempt from this by law. Many businesses have found that announcing they are fur-free has helped their business, as consumers are increasingly purchasing with their consciences. This by law will prevent Arlington stores from selling fur in the future, and makes a statement about our community values.

Proponents of this bylaw spoke to managers or owners at Arlington's retail stores who were all very supportive of this bylaw and many stated that they had no intention of selling fur products. Ceilidh Yurenka, owner of local business YES!, said "As an Arlington business owner, I'm in complete support of Article 15 to ban the sale of fur in our town. While it's true that this will not impact my business sales (as I don't sell any fur items) I also am proud to be part of a town that prioritizes humane treatment of animals and reducing the negative environmental impact we have on our community."

Q: What is the point of restricting fur in a town where fur isn't sold?

A: Restricting the sale of fur now will prevent Arlington stores from selling fur in the future. By passing this bylaw, we write our community values into law, Arlington is a town that is free of cruel practices and supports human, environmental and animal health. We can not stop a cruel industry until we stop the demand for their products.

Q: Why this bylaw and why now?

A: This by law is a result of a grassroots coalition of MA towns concerned with animal welfare and the environment. Town Meeting in 2022 passed two ground breaking bylaws to prohibit the use of some rodenticides on town properties, including SGARs, to protect predators such as eagles, falcons, and owls. The proponents of those bylaws have been working in coalition with other towns who are interested in passing similar rodenticide ban bylaws. Several of those Towns have already passed an Anti-Fur bylaw and asked Arlington to join the grassroots movement to prohibit this cruel industry.

Q: Why ban fur?

A: Every year more than 100 million animals are killed solely for their fur. Consumers' growing concern for animal welfare is leading cities and states across the U.S. to ban the sale of animal fur once and for all. In 2019, California became the first state to prohibit the sale of new fur products. Fur sales bans also complement the many fur farming bans that are occurring throughout the EU to expedite the demise of this cruel and dangerous industry.

Statewide Impact

Q: Why pass local legislation while there is a statewide fur ban in process?

A: [H.489/ S.590](#) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FUR PRODUCTS is currently in the committee of Environment and Natural Resources' hearings. The statewide fur ban will likely take many

years to pass. Several towns are working in coalition to pass local bans to demonstrate to the State that there is strong support behind a statewide fur ban and make its passage more likely.

Q: How is this similar to or different from the state bills?

A: The language and definitions of fur and its prohibitions are identical. The State bill, however, has different enforcement mechanisms and doesn't have a religious exemption. It does have a Native American exemption.

Q: How does this affect hunting?

A: This legislation doesn't impact hunting or trapping in any way. This bylaw does not impact MA hunting or trapping laws, which are regulated at the state level. Most hunters sell fur pelts in their raw, unfinished form on the wholesale market, and they are still able to do this. This bylaw only affects the retail sale of finished fur products such as clothing, accessories, and decor.

Impact on Human Health, Environmental and Animal Welfare

Q: What is the human health impact of the fur trade?

A: Fur animals such as foxes and minks are known carriers of SARS viruses, and their cramped living conditions make them "highly susceptible" to COVID-19. Scientists are concerned animal to human contagion may mutate the virus, leading to new SARS-CoV-2 variants that are contagious to humans and thus decrease vaccine efficacy.

According to [The Fur Free Alliance](#), since April 2020, COVID-19 outbreaks have affected more than 450 mink fur farms in Europe and North America, resulting in the culling of over 20 million animals. In 2020, mink on hundreds of fur factory farms in Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Greece and the U.S. tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. According to [The Guardian](#), nearly 100,000 mink on a farm in Spain and an estimated one million mink on Dutch fur farms were killed to prevent the spread of Covid-19 between humans and mink. In the United States, mink have contracted COVID-19 on 16 fur farms in the states of Utah, Wisconsin, Michigan and Oregon

In addition, carcinogenic toxins such as chromium and formaldehyde used in fur tanning seep into surrounding watersheds, polluting drinking water sources.

Q: What is the environmental impact of the fur trade?

A: Fur farms worldwide are consistently reported to violate environmental regulations. Manure, extra feed, and carcasses get thrown into wetlands while runoff from fur farms seeps into watersheds. Fur tanning and dressing contribute to environmental pollution, with carcinogenic toxins such as chromium and formaldehyde used to prevent the skin from decaying. The climate impact of a mink coat is six times higher than that of a faux-fur coat due to the amount of food, water, and land required to sustain the fur industry. According to the Humane Society International (HSI), producing one kilogram of mink fur results in greenhouse gas emission seven times higher than one kilogram of beef and has 34 times the carbon footprint of chicken.

[Studies](#) by the independent environmental sustainability group CE Delft have shown that fur is the highest offending textile—natural or synthetic—with the worst impact per pound in 17 of the 18 environmental

categories considered, including climate change, waste run-off, and toxicity. The climate change impact of mink fur, for example, is at least six times higher than faux fur. Additionally, numerous eco-friendly, faux-furs have been developed in recent years, providing the look of real fur, without real or plastic faux-fur's environmental impact.

Q: Isn't fur eco-friendly and sustainable? Shouldn't we be more concerned about faux fur and other plastic-based textiles?

A: The fur industry is an environmental nightmare. Waste runoff from animals on fur factory farms pollutes the soil and waterways, and the tanning and dying process uses toxic and carcinogenic chemicals, like chromium and formaldehyde, to prevent skin from decaying. Innovation has now led to faux fur being made from biodegradable plant-based or recycled materials that are more humane and better for the earth. A 2013 cradle-to-grave analysis of a real mink coat versus a faux fur coat found that in cases of equal lifespan, a natural mink fur product will always have a higher environmental impact than faux fur, even when the lowest possible environmental impact is used for the feed of the mink.

The Humane Society International commissioned a report to study the fur industry's PR claim that fur is 'the most environmentally friendly material available' and found it to be "inaccurate greenwashing and misleading to both consumers and retailers". According to the report [Fur's Dirty Footprint](#), "when compared to other materials in the report, per kilogram fur has the highest greenhouse gas emissions, which can include carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, with the carbon footprint of 1kg of mink fur found to be 31 times higher than that of cotton and 25 times higher than polyester. The three animal furs also scored worst for water consumption amongst all materials analysed—104 times higher than acrylic, 91 times higher than polyester and five times higher than cotton."

Q: What is the impact of fur trade on animal welfare?

A: The fur industry is particularly cruel, and completely unnecessary. Over 100 million animals – including mink, foxes, raccoon dogs, coyotes and chinchillas – are killed annually for their fur. Fur factory farms produce an estimated 85% of all fur, and most fur is produced in China, where [live skinnings](#) (graphic content warning) have been repeatedly documented. Animal cruelty is the norm in the fur industry: fur animals in the industry spend their lives in cramped, wire-bottom cages, deprived of the ability to engage in natural behaviors. The resulting stress causes serious physical and psychological problems, often resulting in self-mutilation, infected wounds, and cannibalism. These animals are killed in inhumane ways to reduce cost and preserve the quality of their pelts. Common practices include crude gassing, anal/genital electrocution, and neck breaking.

The fur industry is particularly cruel, and completely unnecessary. There are so many eco-friendly faux-furs available that we can't justify the suffering that animals endure, the environmental impact, and the health risk posed by producing fur.

Q: We are eating beef and chicken and other meat? Is this not cruelty much bigger?

A: Farm animals in the USA are protected by [the Humane Slaughter Act](#), which limits how an animal can be killed to ways that aim to lessen their suffering. Fur animals, because they are legally classified as wildlife and not livestock, are not protected under this law. Therefore there are no regulations protecting them from the cruelest forms of slaughter. Furthermore, livestock is used for food, whereas fur animals are killed specifically and only for their fur, which end up as non-essential decoration on luxury objects, such as pom-poms on hats, and coat linings.

Q: Will this set a precedent that will lead to a slippery slope of bans on more commonplace animal products?

A: No. The bylaw excludes from its scope all animals who are legally classified as livestock due to their primary use as food and who are therefore protected by the [U.S. Humane Methods of Slaughter Act](#).

In fact, fur sales ban bylaws are in keeping with a long line of legal precedents at a local, state, and federal level in the United States that have banned animal products or animal uses that are deemed wantonly cruel. Such bans on animal products and uses include: shark fins, dog meat, rhino horns, exotic animal skins, bushmeat, horse meat, exotic animal circuses, and roadside zoos. As with this bylaw, none of the above examples of bans include animals legally classified as livestock.

Q: Fur is already being dropped from many companies' inventories. Why do we still need a ban if fur is going out of fashion?

A: The many retailers who have gone fur free have been strongly influenced by the legislative work being done to ban both fur farming (as in Europe) and fur sales. It is not a coincidence that the largest number of retailers to date banned fur from their inventories only after California passed its statewide fur ban. Legislating fur bans is necessary to continue on the trajectory toward a fur free world. The fur industry is still very much alive. According to 2017 Economic Census Data, Massachusetts ranks the fourth highest for fur sales in the country. Additionally, alternatives to fur that are better for animals, the environment, and humans are becoming more popular. Every fur-free policy and fur ban helps drive innovation for more sustainable and humane alternatives.

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*Thank you to Fur Free Brookline and Lexington for generously sharing your FAQs for adaptation by Fur Free Arlington