**DEFRA CALL FOR EVIDENCE: The Fur Market in Great Britain**

31 May 2021 – **28 June 2021**

BRC Draft Response Author: Nadiya Catel-Autyunova

The direct link to the submission page is here: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/animal-welfare-in-trade/fur-market-in-great-britain/consultation/intro/>

**Background:** The UK government has recently launched a Call for Evidence on the Fur Market in Great Britain to hear what individuals and businesses think about a possible ban on the fur imports and sales. The Call for Evidence is seeking information about the commercial fur sector, as well as soliciting individuals’ and companies’ attitudes towards the sale of animal fur. The evidence that Defra receives, both in terms of quantity and quality, will determine whether the Government decides to move forward with a fur ban.

**Most relevant questions to BRC members:**

**Question 9: Is it wrong for animals to be killed for the sake of their fur?**

Strongly agree – Agree - Neither agree or disagree- Disagree - Strongly disagree

*Our members have a fur-free policy based on animal welfare concerns – therefore the BRC strongly agrees with the statement that it is wrong for animals to be killed for the sake of their fur.*

**Question 10: What are your views on whether any of following methods are acceptable ways to produce fur products?** For each option please select - Strongly Agree- Agree- Neutral- Disagree- Strongly Disagree – Don’t know

• Farming animals primarily for their fur. Strongly Disagree

• Farming animals primarily for their fur but only if subject to an assurance scheme. Strongly Disagree

• Trapping or hunting animals for their fur. Strongly Disagree

• Trapping or hunting animals for their fur but only if as part of a conservation scheme. Strongly Disagree

• Producing fur as a by-product of legal farming (where fur is not the primary value and purpose of animal production but is a component part e.g. meat). Strongly Disagree

• Producing fur as a by-product of legal hunting or population control (where fur is not the primary value). Strongly Disagree

In this question, the term ‘assurance scheme’ refers to an industry-run scheme which sets standards for scheme members relating to how animals are kept, with scheme members being subject to industry-run inspections.

\* HSI will be responding stating that we **strongly disagree** with all methods

**Question 11: What is your attitude towards the import and/or sale and/or export of fur or fur products in GB?**

*The BRC has been a long-standing supporter of fur-free policy and the vast majority of BRC members have a fur-free policy in place, with some members having introduced their fur-free policy in 2011. Through this, members have a continued commitment not to sell real animal fur regardless of whether it is permitted in legislation. The vast majority of our members do not import or sell, or export fur, therefore a ban on the trade would have no effect as our membership does not trade in real fur market.*

*We are aware of public and customer opinion around this type of product. Indeed, over 70% of the UK public is opposed to real fur on moral and ethical grounds especially following the ban on fur farming in the UK in 2000. Our members fur-free policies are informed by the beliefs and expectations of the majority of UK consumers, who reject animal fur on ethical grounds. Retailers are doing their part to provide consumers with artificial/faux fur alternatives. In fact artificial/ faux fur fabrics are now so realistic, several members clearly indicate they are using artificial/ faux fur on the product care label and online to ensure the customer is clear they are purchasing artificial/ faux fur at point of sale.*

*We are also aware that the words the* [*public most closely associate with a fashion brand that sells fur are negat*](https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/5r7ryfdp97/HSI_FurRegulation_200305_w.pdf)*ive, including ‘unethical’,’ outdated’, ‘cruel’ and ‘out of touch’.*

*Our understanding is that there is a lack of demand from customers for real fur, in fact recent* [*public opinion shows 93% of*](https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/5r7ryfdp97/HSI_FurRegulation_200305_w.pdf) *the public shun real fur, and only 3% wear it. Another* [*polling*](https://yonderconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/OmFur_Trade-Page1.pdf) *indicated that 72% of the public "support a ban on the import and sale of animal fur in the UK”. More recently in a* [*speech*](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-04-21/debates/21042113000001/FurTrade(Prohibition)) *in the House of Commons, it was indicated that in 2020, the UK imported £20 billion worth of clothing items, but imports of fur and fur articles made up just 0.15% of that total.*

*The BRC and its members strongly believes that retailers have a duty to operate to higher standards of both ethical and environmental practices and we have been campaigning for many years to drive awareness forward on both environmental and ethical matters, including animal welfare. Our members and our members’ customers have strongly held ethical views opposing the use/sale of real fur.*

**Question 22: How has the demand for real fur products changed over the last 5 years for you/ your member’s organisation(s)?**

Significantly Increased- Slightly Increased- Stayed the same- Slightly decreased- -- Significantly decreased

*The majority of our members have a long-standing fur-free policies in place as part of their wider animal welfare policy, with some members having had a ban on the use of real fur since 2011. Therefore, the demand for real fur products has not been changed. We are aware of a lack of demand from our customers for real fur due to the length of time their policies have been in place. There is no demand for products using real fur from our members.*

**Question 23. How has the overall domestic market for real fur products changed over the last 5 years?**

*The majority of our members have long-standing fur-free policies in place as part of their wider animal welfare policies with some members having had a ban on the use of real fur since 2011, therefore the demand for real fur products has not been changed due to the length of time their policies have been in place. In addition to working with the BRC on this matter, many members also work with the Humane Society International and their Fur Free Retailer website https://furfreeretailer.com which lists retailers and brands who have fur free policies in place. In addition, we are aware of the work of the FurFreeBritain campaign and the related publicity showing the conditions of animals on fur farms.*

*We are aware of a lack of demand from our customers for real fur, in fact you* [*public opinion shows*](https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/5r7ryfdp97/HSI_FurRegulation_200305_w.pdf) *93% of the public shun real fur, and only 3% wear it. We are also aware that the words the* [*public most closely associate with a fashion brand that sells fur*](https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/5r7ryfdp97/HSI_FurRegulation_200305_w.pdf) *are negative, including ‘unethical’,’ outdated’, ‘cruel’ and ‘out of touch’.*

*Our members and our members’ customers have strongly held ethical views opposing the use/sale of real fur and their fur-free policies are informed by the beliefs and expectations of the majority of UK consumers, who reject animal fur on ethical grounds.*

**Question 24. Please provide any evidence of the scale and trends of the GB market in faux fur.**

*Retailers offer faux fur products across clothing, accessories, footwear and home products, to provide customers with products which meet the beliefs and expectations of the majority of UK consumers, who reject animal fur on ethical grounds. Typically, more faux fur products are sold during an Autumn Winter season as customers are looking for cosy, warm products for themselves and their homes, but faux fur product is generally available across the year.*

*Retailers put in place clear purchasing and testing requirements and inspection guidelines when the stock is received into their warehouses to ensure their suppliers only provide faux fur products – the BRC Voluntary Guidelines on Artificial/Faux Fur is a helpful document to raise awareness as well as provide clear information to recognise the difference between real fur and artificial/faux fur for buyers, technical teams and anyone else working within a retailer, and the steps to take to mitigate the risk. This is a very important aspect for retailers to consider as often, and perhaps contrary to popular belief, real fur can be cheaper than artificial /faux fur. For many retailers their faux fur policy has been in place since 2011.*

**Question 39: Please provide any other relevant evidence you would like to include to inform decisions on the GB fur trade.**

*The BRC is working with its members alongside Humane Society International UK (HSI-UK) to develop best practice for retailers in tackling the issue of real fur being used on products instead of artificial fur. The BRC has prepared Voluntary Guidelines on Artificial/Faux Fur to raise awareness of the issue as well as provide clear information to recognise the difference between real fur and artificial/faux fur for buyers, technical teams and anyone else working within a retailer, and the steps to take to mitigate the risk. In addition to working with the BRC on this matter, many members also work with the Humane Society International and their Fur Free Retailer website https://furfreeretailer.com which lists retailers and brands who have fur free policies in place.*

*On this specific issue, our members are working collaboratively together and with HIS-UK to show how the retail sector is being proactive and that individual retailers have robust procedures in place, for many retailers their faux fur policy has been in place since 2011.*

*The BRC and its members have been continuously calling for greater clarity around labelling regulations on all products by ensuring all real fur components are clearly labelled so it is easy and clear for the consumer to make an informed choice that they are purchasing real fur. BRC members recognise their duty of care to their customers, and their responsibility in selling products that are labelled correctly to help the customer make informed purchases and many members clearly label faux fur fabrics as they are now so realistic to clearly indicate they are using faux fur on the product care label and online to ensure the customer is clear they are purchasing faux fur at point of sale.*

*We also wish to highlight that any legal restriction on imports and sales would assist our members and their teams in avoiding fake faux fur, i.e. real fur that is mis-sold as faux fur, and therefore would enable certainty and clarity – especially when it comes to spot checks with regards to artificial/faux fur trims and other small component parts.*

*Due to our consumers’ awareness of cruelty to animals on fur farms, their increasing concerns about animal welfare and the environment, and views/feedback from our members on a regular basis, we are proud to have a long-standing fur-free policy.. Many members also work with the Humane Society International and their Fur Free Retailer website https://furfreeretailer.com which lists retailers and brands who have fur free policies in place, some in place since 2011 – this is true for Next, ASOS and M&S for example.*

*We understand that our members have no intention to sell real animal fur in the future, and we know fur is not something our members’ customers/employees/company/shareholders would support.*

*Finally, we also believe the UK has been a role-model in being the first country in the world to ban fur farming nearly twenty years ago. There is now an opportunity for the Government to reaffirm UK’s ambition to be a “world leader in animal welfare” - a clear stance on banning real fur trade in the UK would have a major international resonance.*

For retailers/brands who have very recently stopped selling real animal fur (in the last 5 years):

**Question 21: Have you made any recent changes in how you source or trade in fur products?**

may wish to respond to this question if any members have recently taken the decision to stop selling real fur, need to give the reason for that decision and, if appropriate, any effects it has had