

CALLS FOR MORE HUMANE METHODS OF DESPATCH FOR MINK

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Calls for more humane methods of dispatch for farmed mink

According to a report in New Scientist, research suggests that farmed mink are killed using a method which causes unnecessary suffering.

The method in question is by gassing with CO₂. The evidence came to light following research conducted at the University of Oxford and the University of Bristol. An experiment was devised to test the response of the animals to excessive levels of the gas. They trained a number of mink to seek out a reward in a test chamber which could be pumped with CO₂.

An object of interest to the naturally curious mink was placed inside the chamber which the mink happily played with, as long as no CO₂ was present. However, as soon as the gas was introduced they immediately turned tail and headed for the exit or backed off very quickly, coughing and spluttering. Other similar experiments using argon instead of CO₂ have also been conducted. The mink were happy to enter the chamber but seconds later, made a swift exit.

The experiments show therefore, that mink can detect low levels of oxygen. A fact further endorsed by the fact that in the wild, mink spend a considerable amount of time underwater and can easily detect low levels of oxygen. This, argue the researchers, shows that any method of gassing which causes distress before rendering the mink unconscious may not be humane.

Currently, farmed mink may be killed with carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, injected with a lethal dose of barbiturates or, following stun via electric shock, have their necks broken.