



FUR COMMISSION USA

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Senator Floyd Prozanski
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Sen.JeffGolden@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: SB 832 and farm security

Many have been given the impression that Oregon mink producers are somehow less than transparent and forthcoming regarding their farm operations. The anti-fur lobby insists they are "operating underground" and "shrouded in secrecy". But when it comes to mink farming, personal safety takes precedence. And though it may seem to some outsiders that the farmers may act unduly guarded, they are just trying to protect their business, their families, and a modicum of privacy, and for good reason. Memories are long for the Oregon mink farmers, and experience has taught them to be very aware of the wolf in sheep's clothing.

In the early morning hours of June 9, 1991, mink farmers lives were changed forever. At least 6 incendiary devices exploded, engulfing the barn and research facilities at Oregon State University's Experimental Mink Farm. Along with feed, bedding, and equipment to care for the animals, decades of research documents and records on mink health and disease were destroyed. This was the launching of the Animal Liberation Front's five-state arson campaign against the fur industry, and the beginning of the attacks on Oregon's mink farmers. Within a few months a Willamette Valley mink farm and a mink feed supplier were firebombed. Since then, two more universities have had their mink research facilities destroyed, tens-of thousands of mink have been released from farms, hundreds of farms damaged and records destroyed, and thousands of hard working farm families traumatized.

In October of 2008, a fur farming family awoke one morning at their mink ranch in NW Oregon, to find over 1,500 of their prized mink gone and the pens destroyed, many of the animals were frantically scurrying about the yard. Hundreds died, some of dehydration or starvation, others to the stress of the attack. This was the third Oregon farm attacked that Fall. The family had emigrated from Finland, where they had raised mink for generations. They loved the USA and had never imagined this could happen to them in the 'land of the free'. A year later, almost to the day, they were attacked again, and lost 300 more mink. Little could they know then; it was going to get worse.

In the predawn hours of July 27th, 2010, eight incendiary devices simultaneously exploded around the family home, engulfing farm machinery, vehicles, and structures in front of and behind their home. Animal Liberation Front Spokesperson Peter Young stated at the time, "I think that people are aware that releasing mink from a farm can potentially shut farms down but using incendiary devices can get the job done much more efficiently."

Ever since that first fateful night in 1991, Oregon's mink farmers have suffered vandalism, death threats, property destruction, arson attacks, and animal releases. It continues to this day. As recently as December, members of Direct Action Everywhere, a California based group whose specialty is farms raids, were identified outside mink farms in 4 Oregon counties.

So when animal rights activists accuse the mink farmers of "operating underground" or being "shrouded in secrecy", I can tell you they'd love nothing more than to be able to publicly promote their businesses and talk about their expertise in animal husbandry. But memories are long, and privacy is safer.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Whelan", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael Whelan
Executive Director