

Traceability, Sustainability Ushers In New Era for Natural Fur

Furmark® is an industry game changer that will tap into a new customer base who prioritizes transparency, traceability and sustainable practices.

The natural fur industry is entering a new era by deploying technology that is a game changer as it allows customers to purchase and wear natural fur with complete confidence. Furmark® is a global certification and traceability system, which guarantees animal welfare and environmental standards are met across the entire natural fur supply chain.

The new system is expected to attract consumers, retailers and designers who are interested in natural fur and expect more sustainable and traceable products.

Developed by the International Fur Federation (IFF) and with input from LVMH Group and other notable brands, the Furmark® system assures that consumers are buying natural fur products that are traceable, verified, and guaranteed to have met recognized standards. The system's traceability is

embedded into the practices across the complete supply chain — from the farm or wild fur source to the auction house, to dressing and dyeing processors, then to the manufacturer and then onto the retailer who sells to the consumer. ChainPoint is the technology that underpins the Furmark® system from auction up until the consumer.

The IFF was established in 1949, and represents and regulates the global fur sector via 56 member associations that are located in over 40 countries around the world. The IFF's Furmark® certification system leverages a unique alphanumeric label code that provides complete traceability details such as the type of fur used, its origin and the animal welfare program followed as well as manufacturer and dresser.



Here, Fairchild Media Group (FMG) spotlights the leadership of the IFF, which launched the Furmark® system, along with several industry stakeholders who have varying roles across the natural fur supply chain. They share their insights into how the system works, the specific part they play in Furmark® and why natural fur is a more sustainable, versatile and fashionable material choice for the apparel and luxury goods industry.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEADER



Mark Oaten, CEO of the IFF

WHAT MAKES NATURAL FUR A GOOD CHOICE FOR CONSUMERS, BRANDS, AND RETAILERS?

Natural fur aligns with the current fashion movement towards investing in slower fashion, less production, more quality and long-lasting materials that are kinder to the planet. Inherently, fur is natural, biodegradable, and can be restyled and continuously serviced through its lifetime before being passed on to the next generation. And now, with the launch of Furmark®, it is also certified and traceable.

This is the modern luxury that consumers are looking for, and brands and retailers are taking notice.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS DRIVING CONSUMERS' INTEREST IN NATURAL FUR?

Recent reports suggest that consumers, especially the younger generation, have a notable interest in sustainability and transparency and ultimately the impact of their clothing on the environment. They want to know where their garments are coming from, how they were made, and who made them. Younger Asian consumers, who make up a significant portion of luxury shoppers, are also invested in this movement now.

For us, this is great news, we are part of the slow fashion movement, we have solid sustainability credentials, and with Furmark® we can transparently show our supply chain and give the consumer assurance and confidence in their purchases.

New global research showed that 70% of the public are "open" in some form to designers and brands using natural fur. A majority (65%) of those individuals

responded positively to Furmark® and more than half (56%) say it "very positively" or "positively" changes their view of natural fur. We believe this certification system will further drive interest and demand for natural fur.

FROM A SUSTAINABILITY PERSPECTIVE, WHY IS NATURAL FUR A BETTER CHOICE IN COMPARISON TO OTHER MATERIALS?

The main component used in making alternatives to natural fur is oil and petroleum: alternatives only add on to a growing pollution and microplastics crisis with the latter even entering our food chain. It is shocking to see established high fashion brands using man-made materials such as fake fur, promoting them as a 'sustainable' alternative.

Real fur is a natural, sustainable and a certified material that can biodegrade. Fake plastic alternatives end up in landfills for decades

HOW DOES THE FURMARK® CERTIFICATION SYSTEM WORK?

Furmark® is a comprehensive global certification and traceability system that

guarantees animal welfare and environmental standards. It has been developed by the International Fur Federation with input from LVMH Group and key brands.

Furmark® is a game changer for the fur sector and is transforming the way natural fur is processed through its supply chain. Furmark® certified products have a unique alphanumeric label code that provides full traceability details (fur type; fur origin; animal welfare programme; manufacturer; and place of manufacture), ensuring consumers can buy natural fur with confidence.

The system is based on independent science around animal welfare and the dyes we use to colour the pelts, these standards are then independently tested, and third party certified, and once cleared, we place a label with the QR code on the end product to ensure you know when you are buying a Furmark® certified garment.

Furmark® demonstrates our shared ambition to deliver a transparent, easy-to-understand certification. It means, in short, that people can confidently buy sustainable natural fur.

THE FARMER



Sari Koskinen

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FUR FARMING? CAN YOU HELP DISPEL SOME OF THAT MISINFORMATION?

The most common misconception about fur farming is that animals suffer because of cage-based housing. People also often confuse two, very different things: wild animals and domesticated fur-bearing animals.

Animal welfare standards are science-based: you cannot assess animal welfare if you do not use animal-based indicators that are relevant and tailored to the fur-bearing animals. But engaging with this information requires people to cut-through the (often-shocking) misconceptions. That is why I started my Instagram page: I wanted to show the life of a fur farm, what we do, how animals live and grow. I tell short facts about farming and show how animals are cared for. And I'm ready to answer any questions people have and I have had a lot of good discussions around

the subject: I want facts and expertise to win over misconceptions.

HOW ARE YOU HELPING DELIVER FURMARK®? WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM YOUR FARM TO MEET THE STANDARDS?

We are one part of the production chain, and our farm is WelFur-certified.

It requires three farm assessments to achieve the certification; maintaining it requires one assessment per year for each animal — minks, foxes and Finn raccoon.

There are over 20 different measurements, all chosen for their reliability and scientific validity. WelFur is recognised by the European Commission as a Self-Regulation and Co-Regulation Initiative. After independent, science-based inspection and assessment, we receive a total farm score: if we do not score high enough, we lose our certificate,

and without certification we cannot sell our furs via the auction houses.

Traceability is one of the most important benefits of Furmark® and the next major trend in fashion.

HOW ARE YOU ENSURING ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS ON YOUR FARM?

WelFur (the animal welfare certification programme) is the basis of everything.

This quality system aims to maintain and improve animal welfare, professional farm management, knowledge of species-specific behaviour, housing, and quality feeding. The best furs are produced by animals that are well cared for. Good daily routines ensure that wellbeing is maintained, and regular inspections ensure best practice. Crucially, we are committed to educating ourselves and other people about animal welfare.

THE WILD FUR TRAPPER



Katie Ball

HOW DOES NATURAL FUR TRAPPING WORK IN PRACTICE? CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW IT IS DONE SUSTAINABLY?

Trappers are stewards of the land. They spend much of their time on a specific parcel of land licensed to them, taking

note of changes to the landscape as well as animal populations.

Quotas and limits also help manage how many animals of a specific species are harvested to protect numbers. At the same time, minimum quotas make sure that infrastructure such as roads and rail are protected from issues such as nuisance beavers. Historical data, as well as scientific and current information from the trapper are used in determining quotas.

All of this knowledge and regulations in turn helps trappers make evidence-based decisions as to what to trap for the season ahead. Ensuring population and environmental sustainability is key to how wild fur is harvested and key to Furmark®.

but with education comes clarity and understanding. This is one of the reasons we as trappers need to speak up and share with others our passion for nature.

All traps have been certified by Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS).

Most furbearer populations are up, contrary to popular belief, thanks to sustainable regulations help set by science and trappers.

Working together scientists, industry, trappers, and land-users help maintain the diverse and intricate web of resources that nature has to offer.

WHAT GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS DO YOU NEED TO FOLLOW AND HOW IS THIS INTEGRATED WITHIN THE FURMARK® CERTIFICATION SYSTEM?

Furmark® means that the industry and a

leading international verification and assessment company have collaborated to develop a protocol for wild fur.

Fur trapping takes place within a highly regulated and restricted licensing system. This is done through trapping season length, certified traps, and quotas. All trappers in Ontario must complete a 40-hour trapper's course on top of a hunter safety course and gun safety course.

Obtaining a registered trapline or private lands permit is monitored through the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (NDMNR).

Fur handling and specifications laid out by Fur Harvesters Auction Inc. to deliver the best outcome possible for each pelt.

These are some of the many reasons you can purchase a Furmark® product and take pride in knowing you are supporting a natural, sustainable trade.



THE DRESSER AND DYER



Roberto Tadini

WHAT ARE THE PROCESSES INVOLVED IN DRESSING AND DYEING NATURAL FUR?

Natural fur is processed into a durable material that designers use in fashion: as with all conservation processes, this requires the use of chemicals. The contemporary industry uses Reach

regulation-controlled chemicals, safe for people and the environment.

The dressing process starts with pelts being marked to ensure traceability during every stage of the process. Following this, they are cleaned and softened with salted water and antibacterial soaps. The underside fat is removed by specialists to make the pelts lighter and flexible. It is washed again before being dried, stretched, and oiled with natural substances (such as lanoline) to soften them again. Finally, pelts are cleaned with sawdust and combed by hand.

If the customer requires, pelts are dyed, printed, or sprayed: there are thousands of available colours and combinations, and all these processes comply with Reach regulation.

At every stage, natural resources are reused as much as possible before being cleaned and returned to the environment or being used to produce steam and electricity to run our factory.

FAIRCHILD STUDIO: WHAT MEASURES ARE IN PLACE TO ENSURE THAT PROCESSES MEET THE FURMARK® STANDARD?

Pelts arrive at the dressing company in bundles with clear documentation: all the information is updated on the ChainPoint traceability feature, so we can validate the movements of all pelts.

Every single lot is indelibly marked (punched), ensuring we can process them without the risk of mixing lots. Additionally, each bundle has full documentation at each step of the process, so workers can manually verify their status.

After our work is done and the pelts have been delivered to the customer, all documents and the ChainPoint traceability feature is updated fully, showing their movement from us to them. This is how we ensure only certified pelts enter, and stay within, the Furmark® certification system.

COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT THE PROPERTIES OF NATURAL FUR? WHY DOES IT INTEREST BOTH DESIGNERS AND SUSTAINABILITY LEADS? AND HOW DOES IT COMPARE TO ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS?

People choose fur because of its weight, wear resistance, thickness, and objective value of the materials. In short, its key properties are warmth, lightness, plasticity, resilience, colour, and beauty.

Sustainability professionals are increasingly interested in fur because it is a material which can be used, reused, and then returned to the ecosystem via biodegradation. Fur is a natural, renewable, sustainable resource that can be recycled and upcycled.

It interests designers because it is a material that allows different interpretations: for example, it comes in a range of natural colours and shades. It is also versatile, attracting both a very young and a more classical audience.

THE AUCTION HOUSE



Marika Peuhkuri-Grön, SAGA Furs

WHAT ROLE DOES SAGA FURS PLAY IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN OF THE NATURAL FUR INDUSTRY?

Saga Furs collects, grades, and sells the furs on behalf of the farms. We also

offer full traceability (to a single-pelt level) for the manufacturers.

REGARDING THE FURMARK® CERTIFICATION SYSTEM, WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM AUCTION HOUSES TO MEET THE STANDARDS?

Saga Furs offers skins that are certified by the animal welfare programmes included in the Furmark® certification system. Foxes and Finnracons have been 100% certified for over a decade and mink for the last two years.

FROM AN AUCTION HOUSE PERSPECTIVE, WHY DO YOU BELIEVE FURMARK® IS NEEDED TO REGULATE THE NATURAL FUR SUPPLY CHAIN?

Furmark® provides rigor and reassurance that every step in the supply chain from the auction house to the end customer is traceable, verified, and certified.



CLICK HERE TO SEE A VIDEO FEATURING THESE NATURAL FUR INDUSTRY EXPERTS.

THE MANUFACTURER AND RETAILER



Nick Pologeorgis

WHAT MAKES NATURAL FUR FASHIONABLE, AND WHY DO SO MANY DESIGNERS CONSIDER FUR THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR THEIR COLLECTIONS?

Pologeorgis has been lucky enough to work with the most talented and innovative designers over six decades. We have worked with Pierre Balmain, Michael Kors, Zandra Rhodes, Zac

Posen, and Ralph Rucci, among others. Each of these has a unique design aesthetic and they all want to work with fur.

They choose to work with fur because fur is not only a beautiful natural material but is incredibly versatile: it offers a range of options and looks at a range of different price points.

One of the designers we are very proud to have worked with for many seasons is Ralph Rucci. He is renowned for his couture designs and is the only American designer recognised to show in Paris. He loves fur and each of his collections incorporates some fur; he especially loves sable and its natural colouration, the deepness of the shades, and the softness of the pelts.

CAN YOU SPEAK TO THE SUSTAINABILITY, VERSATILITY, AND DURABILITY OF NATURAL FUR?

Natural fur is beyond doubt the most sustainable and durable of all fabrics. There really is no comparison. It is one of the reasons that I love working with fur. As a second-generation furrier I

had the experience of redesigning and remodelling furs from an early age. I learned from my father and the talented craftsman that fur can be reworked and repurposed.

I love the process of working with a client to envisage their own garment, or a vintage garment they have inherited, into something completely new. It is a process that illustrates the value of natural fur versus man made fabrics or fake fur.

We have also found ways to reuse garments that cannot be restyled: those beyond repair can still be made into pillows and blankets. We take care to keep all the scraps of old furs as well as salvage furs (from new garments) and reuse them into new pieces.

When furs finally give out, they naturally decompose they don't go into a landfill. This is a major issue in the fashion industry, as more and more 'fast fashion' garments are discarded and thrown away.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE FURMARK® CERTIFICATION SYSTEM PLAY IN

THE MAKING AND MERCHANDISING OF NATURAL FUR PRODUCTS? WHAT DOES IT REPRESENT?

The Furmark® certification system is an amazing new tool for fur manufacturers, retailers, and the consumer.

As Mark Oaten, CEO, International Fur Federation, notes, it really is a "game changer." It offers an easy-to-understand system for the consumer and ensures they can have confidence in the product they are investing in.

Furmark® ensures that the process, from beginning to end, is traceable and verified. Each garment has a scannable tag and unique alphanumeric code which indicates the certified status of the product.

Furmark® confirms the origin of the fur and the standards it has been produced to: it is a guarantee, a promise, to the consumer that they have purchased a garment of quality with specific provenance. What other industry within fashion stands behind their products? I am proud that the fur industry is a pioneer with sustainable and ethical fashion.

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