



UNITED STATES MISSION  
TO THE  
EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, December 18, 1997

Dear Sirs:

As you know, representatives of the United States of America and the European Community today signed an Agreed Minute related to humane trapping standards. With respect to that Agreed Minute, I am pleased to inform you of the following:

As reflected in the Agreed Minute, authority to regulate traps and trapping methods for the taking in the United States of terrestrial or semi-aquatic mammals resides primarily in the State and tribal authorities. As a result of our discussions on these issues, representatives of the competent authorities in the United States have advised that they have intensified their efforts to identify more humane traps and already a fifty state initiative, in cooperation with several Federal agencies, has begun to develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for traps and trapping methods.

Best Management Practices involve a practice or combination of practices that are identified to be the most effective and practicable (technically, economically and socially) means to reduce or prevent problems associated with an activity. Representatives of the competent authorities in the United States have advised that BMP's for traps and trapping methods will be based upon the latest technical and scientific information and data.

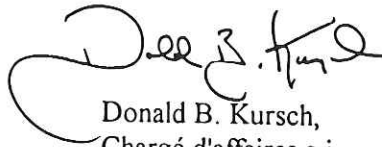
Representatives of the competent authorities in the United States have advised that Best Management Practices for traps and trapping methods in the United States will be developed based upon the Standards annexed to the Agreed Minute. I am particularly pleased to inform you that the program that is being undertaken by the U.S. competent authorities is not limited to the nineteen species listed in the Standards annexed to the Agreed Minute, but is being applied to the additional ten fur-bearing species commercially trapped in the United States. These species are the mink, red fox, gray fox, arctic fox, swift fox, nutria, opossum, skunk, bassarisk and wolverine. This constitutes an important further step undertaken by the competent authorities in the United States designed to improve animal welfare, a step which we believe has not been matched by any other country or in any international agreement.

Additionally, representatives of the competent authorities in the United States have indicated that, pursuant to the Standards annexed to the Agreed Minute, with respect to the *Mustela ermina* and the *Ondatra zibethicus*, the use of all jaw-type leghold restraining traps is being phased out within four years of the entry into force of the Agreement on Humane Trapping Standards between Canada, the European Community and the Russian Federation. These two species encompass over 2.2 million animals trapped every year in the United States and represent typically 50% of all animals listed in the Standards trapped annually in this country.

With respect to the trapping of other species described in the Standards, the above-referenced authorities have advised that, pursuant to the Standards annexed to the Agreed Minute, the use of conventional steel-jawed leghold restraining traps is being phased out within six years of the entry into force of the Agreement on Humane Trapping Standards between Canada, the European Community and the Russian Federation.

I trust that the foregoing provides sufficient clarification with respect to the situation in the United States. The competent authorities in the United States anticipate and welcome continued cooperation in this area with the European Community and other interested parties.

Sincerely,



Donald B. Kursch,  
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Jean-Jacques Kasel  
Ambassador,  
Permanent Representative of Luxembourg,  
Chairman  
of the Permanent Representatives Committee

Johannes Friedrich Beseler  
Director-General  
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