

Developed by Fur Commission USA in
consultation with qualified
Veterinarians, Animal Scientists,
Farmers and Animal Welfare
Professionals

STANDARD GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF MINK FARMS IN THE UNITED STATES

2019 Edition

Book 2:

- **Farm Audit Instrument**



FUR COMMISSION USA

Standard Guidelines for the Operation of Mink Farms in the United States

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONSENT FOR AUDIT

Farm name: _____

Address of Farm: _____

Mailing Address (if different) _____

Number of breeding mink: _____ females

Number of sheds/barns: _____

Farm Representative present for audit: _____ Position: _____

Best way to contact (circle):

Office #: _____ Cell #: _____ Email: _____

Any directions that may be needed to the farm:

I have enclosed the required \$200 USD for the Herd Certification Audit

I will provide an interpreter should one be needed.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I _____ (print name) consent to the farm visit by the authorized representative of the Fur Commission USA, for the purpose of an on farm audit.

I agree to give the auditor access to records and documents as needed to verify adherence to the Standard Guidelines Audit criteria.

Signature: _____ Date _____



SCOPE OF THE ON-FARM AUDIT

The goal of the On-Farm Audit is to assess a mink farms' compliance with the *Standard Guidelines of the Operation of Mink Farms in the United States (SGOM)*. The Auditors will be trained by the contracted third party auditing company and industry representatives to evaluate all the audit criteria by using verbal descriptions, photography, videos and on-farm demonstrations. The On-Farm Audit is designed as an evaluation process on how well the mink farm has implemented all the criteria of the SGOM.

The entire program is divided into 3 books, which together encompass the whole program

The audit instrument will be in digital format on a tablet and the auditor will complete the audit using this device. The auditor's interaction with the mink farm is limited to this evaluation process and it is not the intention of this audit process for the auditors to offer any instructive or corrective advice to the farmer. This audit process is limited to commercial mink farms and is not intended to be used with other farm raised species. There will be a continual process, at a maximum of 5 years of updating the SGOM and the On-Farm Audit process as more knowledge is gained from research and the on-going process of auditing farms. The individual audit criteria will be continually evaluated as to how they reflect the corresponding criteria in the SGOM and how best to construct the individual audit criterion.

The timing of the audits will be scheduled every 14 to 17 months as to allow consecutive audits to encompass the 3 production phases of the annual production cycle: the Conditioning Period, the Reproduction Period and the Growth/Furring Period. This will achieve the goal of allowing all the different age classes of mink and their environments to effectively be evaluated.

The **Conditioning Period** is from December 1st through February 28th. The audit inspection period will be January 1st through February 20th.

The **Reproduction Period** (mating, gestation, whelping, lactation, weaning) is from March 1st through July 15th. The audit inspection period will be March 25th through April 10th and May 10th through June 10th.

The **Growth/Furring Period** is from July 15th through November 30th. The audit inspection period will be between July 20th (or after weaning has occurred for individual farms) and October 20th.

The on-farm audit instrument is divided into 3 sections; Critical Care Requirements, the Recommended Care and Management Practices, and the Records Checklist. The criteria in the first two sections have a point system awarded to them. **THE FARM NEEDS TO PASS ALL THE CRITICAL CARE CRITERIA.** The points accumulated throughout the process are combined to produce a final score at the conclusion of the audit. A Technical Review Committee has been established to mediate any disputed criteria scoring. This final score is used to determine if the farm has achieved *Fur Commission USA Merit Award Herd Welfare Certification* status. All the data accumulated from the audit will be retained by the FCUSA. Individual farm information will be released upon specific request to the FCUSA and approval of the farm.



U.S. Mink Farm Audit Procedure

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Producer Consent for Audit application is received along with the farm Site Plan and Pen Declaration Form			
Scheduling of the audit and notification to producer			
Assessor contacts the producer on the day of the Audit and gains instructions for access onto the farm			
Introductions at farm, farm representative established and review of Audit Procedure			
Producer provide a list of current employees and their job descriptions.			
Assessor reviews mandated Site Plan and Pen Declaration Form along with written protocols and records.			
Cage sampling inspection plan is determined using site plan and cage declaration form. 120 occupied pens, 10 groups of 12 consecutive pens, are randomly selected from a representation of different occupied shed designs on the farm. No distinction needs to be made between sex, age and color types as they are all evaluated the same. The hospital area, if present, is not to be included in the 120 pens selected.			
All pen groups are marked and shed requirements are evaluated and scored.			
Feed prep areas, feed storage areas, back-up water system and euthanasia chamber(s) are evaluated and scored.			
Pens in each group are evaluated and scored.			
Mink in each pen group are evaluated and scored.			
Exit interview with producer; including audit score for Critical and Recommended criteria. Identification of any criteria scoring that may need to be forwarded to the technical review committee.			



U.S. Mink Farm Records Checklist

Indicates **CRITICAL CRITERIA**

	Yes	No	Form #
Section 1: Management			
Site plan			1-101
Records that mink are checked daily for health or welfare concerns			4-101, 102, 108
Records that stock people are trained in proper handling and husbandry			1-103, 104, 105
Veterinarian contact information sheet			1-106
Ammonia levels are recorded			1-107
Written Emergency Plan			1-108,109
Signed employee Code of Conduct and Animal Welfare Policy documents			1-103, 1-110
Section 2: Accommodation			
Pen declaration form			2-101
Written plan for use of false bottoms			2-102
Written plan for C&D of false bottoms			2-102
Section 3: Food and Water			
Records of feed bacterial and component content testing			<i>receipt from testing company</i>
Written protocol for employee training on feed handling			
Records of C&D of feed prep area and equipment			
Written plan of feed adjustment and monitoring			
Nutritionist contact information sheet			3-105
Copy of Feed manufactures storage and feeding directions for purchased complete feeds			<i>from feed supplier</i>
Written plan for spoiled feed disposal			
Records that water system is checked daily			3-111
Records of water component and bacterial quality testing			<i>from testing company</i>
Written plan for addressing extreme variation in water quality			3-111
Written plan for regular water system maintenance			3-111
Written plan for back –up water system			3-111
Section 4: Health			
Written protocol for daily observation process			1-104



Record of daily sick or injured animals			4-101,102
Records of daily mortalities			4-103,104,105
Records of daily individual animal treatments			4-108
Record of total animals treated daily			4-101, 102
Record of stock people being trained to recognize and treat illness or injury and determination of timely euthanasia.			1-104
Written directions for contacting farm manager/owner/veterinarian			1-109
Record of training of stock-people to recognize different body scores			1-104, 4-110
Written vaccination protocol and vaccine documentation			4-109
Body Conditioning Scoring Guide			4-110
Written AD testing protocol			
Section 5: Environmental Quality			
Written Biosecurity plan in place for Farm/Employees/Visitors			<i>Biosecurity protocols</i>
Written plan for manure handling/disposal			5-102
Written plan for mortality handling/disposal			5-103
Written plan for fly and pest control			5-104
Written plan for addressing extreme weather conditions			5-105
Section 7: Harvesting & Euthanasia			
Written harvesting and euthanasia protocols which include confirmation of death			7-101
Written protocol for personnel safety while working with CO			7-101
Record of personnel training in CO handling			1-104, 1-105



FARM AUDIT

Farm Name _____		Farm Owner(s) _____	
_____, _____, _____			
Farm Address; _____			
_____			Phone: _____
Date of Inspection _____		Name of Inspector _____	
_____		_____	

Critical Care Requirements (120 Points)

Any questions answered with "no" are unacceptable and will result in the farmer NOT passing the audit. The Critical Care Requirements are not limited to the designated inspection area and may include any part of the farm observed by the auditor.

Text in BLUE is meant as guidance for the Assessor

<i>Care Criteria</i>	<i>Acceptable Answer</i>	<i>Possible Points</i>	<i>Points Awarded</i>	<i>Comments</i>
SECTION 1 - MANAGEMENT				
1. Stock people/person are trained in proper animal handling and husbandry. (Book 1: 1.10, 1.11 ,4.1, 4.2; Forms 1-103, 104, 105, 110.)		10		
<i>Written protocol and/or video and/or cage side training completed. Training declaration form signed. The producer describes the process of training.</i>				
SECTION 2 - ACCOMMODATION				
2. The farm has a functional and maintained perimeter barrier and/or enclosed barn design sheds (Book 1: 2.1.1.)		10		
<i>Producer should point out and describe the barrier/barn design on the site plan. The assessor can examine the barrier/barn when examining sheds. Many different fencing materials/construction techniques can be appropriate.</i>				
3. Shed or Barn provides animals with protection from differing weather conditions. (Book 1: 2.2)		10		
<i>Shed and/or barn have a solid roof and end walls with a door way. Systems available for opening or closing the side walls. (i.e. curtains and/or plastic that can be attached/detached when needed)</i>				



<p>4. Mink are housed in pens that meet the 2014 Standard Guidelines minimum size and density requirements for all pens constructed before January 1, 2019; or all mink are housed in pens that meet the 2019 updated Standard Guidelines for pens built after January 1, 2019. (Book 1; 2.3, 2.4, form 1-101, 2-101)</p>		10		
<p><i>Assessor should examine the site plan and cage declaration form and compare cages to Standard Guidelines requirements. Date of construction will be on pen declaration form. Use cage worksheet for cage measuring directions and to record findings.</i></p>				
<p>5. Mink must always have access to a nest box and bedding, except for approximately 4 weeks immediately post weaning. (Book 1: 2.4.16)</p>		10		
<p><i>Examine nest boxes when examining cages, have producer show bedding storage, describe bedding usage. Individual mink may continually remove bedding from the nest box. In this case, the mink must be marked and designated for pelting.</i></p>				
<p>6. All whelping pens have false bottoms for the first 20 days after kit birth, or long enough to ensure kits cannot fall through wire. (2.3.2; Book 1)</p>		10		
<p><i>Producer can show auditor stored items</i></p>				
<p>SECTION 3 - FOOD AND WATER</p>				
<p>7. Mink will have access to quality feed on daily basis (Book 1: Section 3)</p>		10		
<p>8. The farm has access to sanitary feed storage to ensure feed quality. (3.1-3.2; Book 1)</p>		10		
<p><i>Producer can show the feed storage area (freezers/coolers/dry storage) and describe amount stored/needed per day of feeding.</i></p>				
<p>9. The feed supply is of quality and quantity to meet the physiological needs of the mink. (3.1-3.3; Book 1)</p>		10		
<p><i>Producer describes the feed procurement, amounts stored and any testing.</i></p>				
<p>10. A supply of quality drinking water is available to meet the physiological needs of the mink at all times. (3.4; Book 1: Page 23; Book 2))</p>		10		
<p><i>Check all inspection cages for water.</i></p>				



11. Water systems are checked daily to ensure they are functioning. (Book 1: 3.4.3, Form 3-111)		10		
<i>Producer describes procedure. Review written protocol and/or records</i>				
SECTION 4 - HEALTH				
12. The farm has direct contact with a veterinarian, a minimum of once a year and at times of major health concerns. (Book 1; 4.1.1-4.1.2, Form 1-106)		10		
<i>Review veterinarian information and contact sheet</i>				
13. Mink are observed daily for any signs of health or welfare concerns. (Book 1: 4.1-4.2, Forms A-101, 4-102, 4-103, 4-111)		10		# of animals w/ FC/BCS1/Unmarked injury ____ % ____
<i>1. Producer describes observation process. 2. Review any written records. 3. Direct Inspection: no more than a total of 2% of the inspected animals will display the combination of scores 2 or 3 for fur chewing; a body condition score of 1, and/or unmarked injury scores of 2 or 3.</i>				
14. Mink that are exhibiting signs of illness or injury are provided with medical care or are euthanized in a timely fashion typically within a work shift (~12 hours) or when treatment is identified to not be appropriate or successful. (Book 1: 4.4; Form A-101, Form 4-111)		10		
<i>Producer describes the medical care process, identification of affected mink and record system. Direct Inspection: auditor examines all mink in sample plus hospital area.</i>				
TOTAL		140		



FARM AUDIT

Recommended Care & Management Practices

Text in BLUE is meant as guidance for the Assessor

<i>Care Criteria</i>	Acceptable Answer	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
----------------------	-------------------	-----------------	----------------	----------

SECTION 1 - MANAGEMENT

	(a) Farm implements written biosecurity plan for staff, and visitors understand and comply with the policies				
	<i>Written biosecurity plan in place. Form 5-101</i>		4		
	<i>Education plan in place for staff. Form 1-103, 104, 105.</i>		2		
	<i>Education plan in place for visitors. Verbal and/or written.</i>		2		
	(b) All stock people involved with the mink are instructed in proper catching and handling of the mink				
	<i>The farm has supplied written record of instruction on proper catching and handling techniques for mink of different ages. Form 1- 103, 104, 105, 1-110</i>				
	<i>Yes = 5 points; No = 0 points</i>		5		
	<i>The farm has supplied video and/or cage side instructions on proper catching and handling techniques for mink of different ages. Producer describe/show video</i>				
	<i>Yes = 5 points; No = 0 points</i>		5		
	(c) Procedures are in place to recapture mink that escape. Form 1-108				
	<i>Live traps and nets are in place on the farm and are monitored and maintained. Producer shows equipment and describes monitoring</i>		3		

SECTION 2 - ACCOMMODATION



	(a) Site plan is available showing size and location of barns, number and size of pens in each, and corresponding housing plan (stocking density) <i>Form 1-101, 2-101.</i>		5		
	(b) Sheds allow space, light, and access for stock people to observe and care for mink and required equipment to operate.				
	<i>There is enough light to easily observe the mink during the daylight hours. Assessor can observe.</i>		1		
	<i>The sheds allow for the natural photo period to be followed (artificial light is allowed) Natural lighting is adequate.</i>		1		
	<i>The alleyways are constructed to allow ease of equipment movement between rows. (At least 30 inches between rows)</i>		1		
	<i>The alleyways are clear of obstructions. Assessor can observe.</i>		1		
	<i>The alleyways are firmly constructed. (Hard packed surface, gravel, cement)</i>		1		
	(c) Sheds allow for proper waste management				
	<i>Cages are at least 12 in. above the ground.</i>		1		
	<i>Equipment available on the farm for manure removal from sheds. Producer describes and shows equipment.</i>		1		
	<i>There is room to access all manure for removal. There is adequate room to remove manure from under the pens from either inside the sheds and/or from outside the sheds.</i>		1		
	<i>Shed/barn design keeps rain water off the manure. There is adequate roof overhang and cage placement.</i>		1		
	(d) Shed/barn design allows airflow within the mink's environment				



FUR COMMISSION USA

Standard Guidelines for the Operation of Mink Farms in the United States

	<i>Sidewalls of the shed can be opened at cage level or below to allow airflow. Assessor observation and discussion with producer</i>		1		
	<i>Sidewalls of the shed can be opened or closed as needed. Adjustable curtains, replaceable plastic or boarding is acceptable</i>		1		
	<i>The ends and/or eaves of the sheds can be opened and/or constructed to allow for air flow. Ridge vents, moveable doors, i.e.</i>		1		
	<i>Fans are available to help circulate air. Fans are present</i>		1		
	<i>Ammonia levels are monitored at key times of the year. Form 1-107</i>		1		
	(e) For pens built before 1/1/2019 but meet the 2019 updated Standard Guidelines designated stocking densities. <i>Book 1; 2.4.23 and Form 2-101</i>				
	<i>50% comply = 5 pts; 75% comply = 10 pts; 100% comply = 15 pts</i>		15		
	(f) Pens and nest boxes are in good repair and in a condition to prevent the mink from injuring themselves. <i>Check that the cages are securely supported, the nest boxes are adequately attached to the pens, both the nest boxes and pens are free of major defects.</i>				
	<i>50% = 4pts; 75% = 6 pts; 100% = 8 pts.</i>		8		
	(g) All pens housing multiple mink are enriched with hammocks/shelves/tubes or jump-up or drop-in boxes. <i>Form 2-101.</i>				
	<i>50% complete = 6 pts; 75% complete = 9 pts; 100% complete = 12</i>		12		
	(h) All pens are enriched with at least one manipulable enrichments. <i>Enrichments can be any object that can be moved by the mink, it can be free in the cage or hung from the ceiling. Book 1; 2.3.9</i>				



	33% complete = 4 pts; 66% complete = 8 pts; 100% complete = 12 pts		12		
	(i) False bottoms are installed, maintained and removed as required during whelping/lactation				
	<i>Farm implements written plan for proper utilization of false bottoms. Book 1: 2.3.2, Form 2-102</i>		3		
	<i>Farm implements written plan for cleaning and disinfecting of the false bottoms. Form 2-102</i>		2		
SECTION 3 - FOOD AND WATER					
	(a) Procedures are in place that monitor feed quality. Specific minimum requirements for daily caloric percentages: Protein 26%; Fat 8%; Carbohydrates 9% (For purchased complete feed, manufacturer's testing can be used). <i>Producer should have copies of tests.</i>				
	<i>Bacterial culture of feed (at least quarterly) (1 point per test, up to 4 points)</i>		4		
	<i>Nutritional analysis of feed (at least quarterly)(1 point per test, up to 4 points)</i>		4		
	(b) Individuals involved with feed preparation/distribution have appropriate training in proper feed handling. <i>Form 1-104</i>				
	<i>Verbal training in equipment functions and feed preparation. Producer describes verbal training.</i>		2		
	<i>Written or video training protocol for equipment function and feed preparation in place.</i>		3		
	(c) Storage/preparation area and feed distribution equipment are regularly cleaned and sanitized				
	<i>Written schedule for cleaning and sanitizing in place.</i>		3		



	<i>Cleaning and disinfection done weekly.</i>		1		
	<i>Cleaning and disinfection done.</i>		1		
	(d) Feed consumption is being monitored and adjusted for time of year				
	<i>Daily monitoring of feed consumption in relationship to the production phase (verbal)</i>		2		
	<i>Written plan in place to adjust feed provided to mink depending on left over feed, body condition, environmental conditions.</i>		1		
	<i>Farm has a relationship with nutritionist, uses a specifically designed program or purchases a complete feed. Form 3-105105</i>		2		
	<i>Complete dry or ready mix feeds are stored and fed according to manufactures directions. Copy of manufacturer's directions.</i>		2		
	(e) Spoiled feed is being removed and disposed of.				
	<i>Spoiled feed is removed. No spoiled feed on cages.</i>		3		
	<i>Written protocol in place for spoiled feed disposal. Book 1; 3.3.3</i>		2		
	(f) Water is tested for component and bacterial quality at least bi-annually. <i>Producer should supply copy of test results</i>				
	<i>2 component tests annually (1 point per test – max of 2 points)</i>		2		
	<i>2 bacterial tests annually (1 point per test – max of 2 points)</i>		2		
	<i>1 component and 1 bacterial test annually at Source.</i>		1		
	<i>1 component and 1 bacterial test annually at end of system.</i>		1		
	<i>Written plan in place to address variations in component and/or bacteria quality. Document Binder</i>		2		



(g) Water systems are flushed and maintained regularly				
<i>Written plan in place for regular water system maintenance, with date of last service.</i>		2		
(h) Back-up plan in place for water system failure				
<i>Written back-up plan and equipment in place for water system failure (power failure, well failure, water-system break down, freezing) Form 3-111</i>				
<i>Yes = 10 points; No = 0 points</i>		10		
SECTION 4 - HEALTH				
(a) The mink are observed daily for signs of illness or injury				
<i>Written protocol is in place describing observation process. Book 1; 1.5</i>		5		
<i>Written record of animals found to be sick or injured. From 4-101, 102</i>		3		
(b) Records are kept and available pertaining to mortalities and health care provided to animals				
<i>Daily written record of mortalities. From 4-103, 104, 105</i>		5		
<i>Written records on animals given treatment. Form 4-108</i>		2		
(c) Stock people are trained to recognize and treat common injuries or illnesses				
<i>Verbal training of individuals by farm manager. Producer describe, review training record</i>		5		
<i>Written material and demonstrations/pictures/videos included in training. Form A-101</i>		2		
<i>Veterinarian involved with assisting stock people recognizing illness. Discuss, with producer/veterinarian documentation.</i>		1		



	(d) Farm maintains supply of common medicines/medical supplies to treat basic injuries/ illnesses				
	<i>Medicines and supplies on hand, with written explanations for use, in place. Form A-101</i>		2		
	<i>Written directions in place for contacting farm managers/owner and/or veterinarian with questions. Form 1-109</i>		2		
	(e) Sick or injured animals are identified/segregated/ and receive proper attention as per their condition. <i>No more than 1% of inspected animals will display a Level 2 or above injury without being marked or segregated.</i>				# unmarked with \geq L2 injury ___ % _____
	<i>System in place for marking and/or recording sick/injured animals' cages.</i>		5		
	<i>Specifically designated and trained employee(s) attend to marked animals. Signed employee training document</i>		2		
	<i>Hospital area or marking system identifying sick/injured animals. Producer identifies hospital area</i>		3		
	(f) Body score condition is monitored and appropriate for time of year				
	<i>A score of 1 on Body Condition is unacceptable. Limit is 1% of animals inspected. Form 4-110</i>		5		# with BCS 1 _____ % with BCS 1 _____
	<i>Fur chewing scores are monitored. Limit is 1% of Score 2 or above. Form 4-111</i>		5		# with FC 2 or 3 _____ % with FC 2 or 3 _____
	(g) Farms have a herd vaccination program. Form 4-109				



	<i>Farms have a vaccination program for the entire herd. Producer describe</i>		2		
	<i>Written plan in place for vaccination and documentation of products used. Form 4-109</i>		2		
	<i>Administer, handling and storage of vaccine and equipment as per manufacturers recommendations Manufacturer's recommendations</i>		2		
	(h) The mink are screened for Aleutian Disease				
	<i>The farm has a written protocol in place describing their Aleutian Disease testing.</i>		2		
SECTION 5 - ENVIRONMENTAL QUALTY					
	(a) Farm implements written management plan for manure handling and disposal. <i>Document Binder</i>				
	<i>Yes = 5 points; No = 0 points</i>		5		
	(b) Farm implements written management plan for fly control. <i>Document Binder. Observe farm for abnormal fly populations (some flies are normal)</i>				
xx	<i>Yes = 3 points; No = 0 points</i>		3		
	(c) Farm implements written management plan for pest control (rodents, birds, etc.) <i>Form 5-104. Observe farm for rodents. (Some birds are normal)</i>				
	<i>Yes = 3 points; No = 0 points</i>		3		
	(d) Farm implements written management plans for addressing the effects of extreme weather conditions on the mink. <i>Form 5-105</i>				
	<i>Yes = 3 points; No = 0 points</i>		3		
SECTION 7 - EUTHANASIA and HARVEST					
	(a) Farm has and implements written euthanasia and harvesting protocols. <i>Form 7-101 AND on chamber</i>				



FUR COMMISSION USA

Standard Guidelines for the Operation of Mink Farms in the United States

	<i>Written protocol for proper euthanasia and harvesting techniques in place for all to see.</i>				
	<i>Yes = 5 points; No = 0 points</i>		5		
	(b) Euthanasia chamber is tightly sealed and in good repair. <i>Examine chamber</i>				
	<i>Yes = 5 points; No = 0 points</i>		5		
	(c) Farm implements written protocols to address safety of personnel while storing, handling or administering CO. <i>Form 7-101</i>				
	<i>Yes = 5 points; No = 0 points</i>		5		
	(d) All personnel involved in harvesting and euthanasia of mink are properly trained. <i>Form 1-104, 105</i>				
	<i>Personnel are routinely evaluated for adherence to written protocols and understanding. Producer describes evaluation process</i>		5		
	POINTS From CRITICAL CARE		140		
	POINTS From RECOMMENDED CARE		231		
	TOTAL POINTS		371		
	TOTAL POINTS to Pass Audit		305		Pass Fail (Circle one)