

**EUROGROUP
FOR
ANIMALS**



GAIA

Why do we need a ban on seal products?

Never before has there been a better time to strike a blow against the seal hunt. The European Commission is currently considering a ban on all seal products. As the European Union accounts for a third of all Canadian seal products exports, a ban could spell the end of the hunt there.

This is why Eurogroup for Animals is joining forces with animal welfare organisations from all over Europe to hold an international demonstration in Brussels on 1 July. The demonstration on 1 July will take place outside the Commission's headquarters and will send a clear message that people in Europe are no longer willing to support this deadly trade.

Each year hundred of thousands of seals are killed to please people looking for a second-hand skin. In Canada alone 275,000 seals will be killed this year. Hunters focus on the very young; 98% are less than three months old. This means most of the animals are killed before they had a chance to have their first swim or enjoy their first solid food. The hunt seriously damages seals' sustainability at a time when they are already under threat by global warming. According to scientists three quarters of the pups in the Gulf of St Lawrence died before the start of the hunt in 2002 because there was not enough ice.

The seal hunt is not even that important economically. Hunters are only able to hunt for a couple of weeks each year, so it is not where they get the majority of their income from. In the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador the hunt only makes up less than one half of one per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. This does not even take into account that the hunt is being heavily subsidised by the Canadian government. It spends millions on promoting the hunt abroad, funding research, and providing services to hunters.

This year the price of a pelt has dropped dramatically, putting more pressure on hunters to kill more animals in a short amount of time. Footage shot by animal welfare organisations IFAW and HSI taken during this year's hunt show hunters rushing from one animal to another., leaving no time to kill seals humanely. Observers have reported seals being skinned or hooked while still alive. These brutal acts do not only happen this year; they happen every year.

But the problem is not limited to Canada alone. The seal hunt also takes place in countries such as Russia and Namibia. A European Union ban on seal products would help to make these hunts become less viable and would be one step closer to them becoming abolished one day.

Now for the first time in decades the European Union is close to deciding on this ban. Animal welfare organisations such as Eurogroup for Animals, HSI and IFAW are organising a demonstration on 1 July outside the headquarters of the European Commission to encourage them to do the right thing. This is a historic opportunity to get a clear and unqualified ban with no excuses and no exemptions.

For more information, call Iain Reddish, coordinator of the demonstration, on +32 (0)2 740 0892 or email him on i.reddish@eurogroupforanimals.org.