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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **ANIMAL RIGHTS ORGANIZATION FILES CIVIL RIGHTS LAWSUIT AGAINST MORGAN COUNTY**

- Lawsuit claims that Morgan County's demand that protesters pay for police officers' time and ordinance requiring protesters to stay 1,000 feet away from a fur farm are unconstitutional

A lawsuit was filed on October 29, 2009 in Federal District Court on behalf of the animal rights organization Salt Lake Animal Advocacy Movement (SLAAM) and two of its members, Colleen Hatfield and Jeremy Beckham. The lawsuit was filed through counsel Brian Barnard and alleges that Morgan County enacted laws and regulations that infringe on the constitutional rights of members of SLAAM.

SLAAM intends to hold a protest on November 28, 2009 in Morgan County outside fur farms. The county has enacted ordinances specifically intended to curb the rights of SLAAM to protest on November 28. SLAAM has established a website at [FurFreeUtah.com](http://FurFreeUtah.com) outlining plans for the protest. The full complaints against Morgan County and UDOT can also be found on this website.

"Free speech is quickly becoming fee speech," said Colleen Hatfield, SLAAM director. "First UDOT wants a \$1,000,000 liability insurance policy and now Morgan County wants us to pay for their police officers' time. If we were to let these policy decisions stand, only the rich would have the right to get their message heard in America." Morgan County Chief Deputy Kevin Edwards indicated to SLAAM that the charge would be \$40 per hour per officer. In addition, the lawsuit alleges that Morgan County may not constitutionally prohibit protesters from picketing within 1,000 feet of a fur farm, even if a residence is found on the farm.

With fifteen operating fur farms, Morgan County has more fur farms than any other county in the U.S. Fur farms have long been the target of animal rights organizations due to their controversial animal husbandry practices and killing methods. Animals on fur farms are killed by anal electrocution or suffocation to keep the coat intact. Last year, members of the underground Animal Liberation Front (ALF) released thousands of mink from fur farms in Kaysville and South Jordan.

"SLAAM wants to shed light on the unspeakable and unnecessary animal suffering that is typical on American mink farms," said Jeremy Beckham, SLAAM member. "The mink farmers want to keep their cruelty hidden from public view - we intend to shed light on it this November 28<sup>th</sup>."