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Dr. M. Eloit
Director General
World Organisation for Animal Health
12, Rue de Prony
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FRANCE

Date 16 July 2020
Re Update situation with respect to SARS-CoV-2 infections in mink in The Netherlands

Dear Director General, Dear Dr. Eloit,

I herewith would like to update you, based on article 1.1.6.1 of the TAHC of the OIE, about the situation with regard to the SARS-CoV-2 infection in mink in The Netherlands. I informed you about the first cases in mink on 26 April 2020 and provided an update on 29 May 2020 and 9 June 2020. Since my latest letter, new developments have occurred.

As mentioned in my letter of June we have two methods in place to detect either clinical or subclinical infections with SARS-CoV-2 infection in mink. One is the obligation to notify suspicions and the second early warning system (EWS). We have carried out a serological screening in May to get an overview of the situation, and will do that a second time later this summer.

Currently we have 24 infected mink farms in the Netherlands. Twenty are located in the province of Noord Brabant, and four in the province of Limburg. On eight farms the owner noticed clinical signs and reported the suspicion to the competent authority, the infections on the other farms were detected through the EWS.

We carry out tracing activities to identify possible sources of SARS-CoV-2 infections. Based on sequence analyses the route "infected employee to mink" seems likely for some farms, but for other farms the source of infection is unknown. Sequence analysis of the isolates from mink showed clustering of the viruses, but no clear links were identified between the various farms. As it is important to gain more insight in the routes of transmission we will carry out additional research with respect to possible sources of virus introduction and epidemiological links between the infected premises.

We have intensified the control of implementation of the biosecurity measures by the competent authority and obliged the sector to include an additional element in the hygiene protocol which implies that employees have to wear masks and gloves during working in the sheds to reduce the possibility of transmitting the virus from sub-clinically infected employees to mink. The measures apply to all mink farms in the Netherlands.

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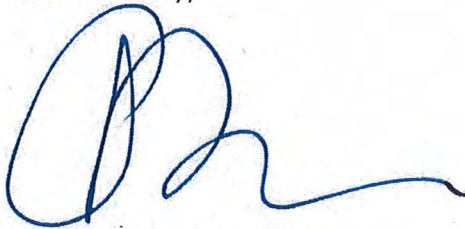
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On some uninfected farms the owners have problems with the storage of the manure. We allow owners from uninfected farms to transport manure under specified conditions. In our opinion, when adhering to the conditions set in the regulation, transport and deposit of manure from uninfected farms can be permitted and can be done in a responsible way.

We continue the EWS the next couple of weeks and I will keep you informed about future developments.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Christianne Bruschke
Chief Veterinary Officer of The Netherlands