



Ministry of Agriculture,
Nature and Food Quality

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Dr. M. Eloit
Director General
World Organisation for Animal Health
12, Rue de Prony 75017
Paris
FRANCE

Date 6 October 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 DIE, about the situation with regard to the SARS-CoV-2 infection in mink in The Netherlands.

Currently 62 infected mink farms in the Netherlands have been infected. Forty three (43) are located in the province of Noord Brabant, seventeen (17) in the province of Limburg and two in the province of Gelderland. On 25 farms the owner noticed clinical signs and reported the suspicion to the competent authority whereas 37 infections were detected through the early warning system (obligation to send in dead animals weekly).

We carry out tracing research to elucidate the still unidentified sources of virus introduction. We also carry out intensive research at certain farms. For example on some farms the early warning samples at a certain time showed a weak PCR signal that was not confirmed in the official samples. Later on, mink on some of these farms developed clinical symptoms. In addition, serological examination showed some farms that were seronegative at the time of culling, suggesting a recent infection, whereas on some other farms up to 70% of the mink were seropositive despite the early warning and notification system, suggesting that the infection may have spread for a longer time than we previously hypothesized. We will look in more detail to a possible role of wild life, e.g. bats and Mustelidae, and wild birds. Taking into account all the hygienic measures employees working on mink farm are taking, and the strict procedures for personnel working on farms, which I have mentioned in my previous letter, it seems unlikely that personnel currently transmit the virus between farms. Finally I would like to emphasize that there is still no indication of spread of virus into the human population.

I am in close contact with my colleague from Denmark about the situations in our respective countries and we share all the knowledge and information that is available. We organized a meeting with scientists and policy makers of both countries about the situation, and the various control measures both countries have taken.

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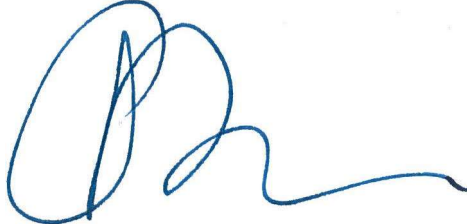
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Currently, we are preparing for the period in which mink owners will start killing the animals for harvesting pelts. We consider applying additional measures regarding testing and/or protection of personnel to guarantee employees can do their work safely. We are also still working on the new legislation to end mink farming in the Netherlands in March 2021, before the new breeding period.

I include the report of the outbreak management team zoonoses of 24 August, and a map of the outbreaks. I will keep you informed about any relevant development.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. C.J.M. Bruschke
Chief Veterinary Officer of the Netherlands