



> P.O. Box 20401 2500 EK The Hague The Netherlands

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

Date 9 June 2020  
Re Update 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. I informed you about the first cases in mink on 26 April 2020 and provided an update on 29 May 2020. Since my latest letter, new developments have occurred.

We have three methods in place to detect either clinical or subclinical infections with SARS-CoV-2 (CoV-2) infection in mink.

Firstly the obligation to notify suspicions where mink owners have the obligation to report respiratory signs and/or increased mortality to the competent authority immediately.

Secondly the early warning system (EWS) where holders of mink are obliged to weekly send 3-5 carcasses of recently died mink to the Animal Health Service for post mortem examinations and testing by PCR for the presence of CoV-2. From positive farms samples are taken by the competent authority for confirmation. The EWS will remain mandatory for as long as we deem it necessary.

Thirdly the serological screening which is currently carried out. All farms have to be examined serologically. The results will most likely become available this week. With the combination of these 3 methods we hope to detect all infected farms.

#### Update number of infected farms

Currently we have 13 infected mink farms in the Netherlands. Eleven are located in the province of Noord Brabant, and two in the province of Limburg from which 5 farms had clinical symptoms, and 8 were detected in the EWS (of which one was a contact farm). The infections on these farms were mainly subclinical and few showed some lung problems at the postmortem examinations.

#### Policy with respect to infected farms

Another issue I would like to raise is the change in policy regarding the infected premises.

The expert group on animal diseases has discussed the latest results of the extensive investigations on the first 3 infected premises and concluded that SARS-

**Directorate-General Agro**  
Animal Supply Chain and Animal  
Welfare Department

**Visit address**  
Bezuidenhoutseweg 73  
2594 AC Den Haag  
The Netherlands

**Postal address**  
P.O. Box 20401  
2500 EK Den Haag  
The Netherlands

**Organisation Code**  
00000001858272854000

T +31 (0)70 379 8911  
F +31 (0)70 378 6100  
www.rijksoverheid.nl/Inv

**Dealt with by**  
A. Bouma

T +31 (0)70 757 3639  
A.Bouma@minInv.nl

**Our ref.**  
DGA-DAD / 20163669

**Your ref.**

**Encl.**

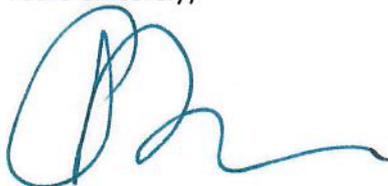
CoV-2 may circulate for a long period on most of the infected mink farms. The epidemiological explanation is as follows: the number of animals per farm is now 5-6 times higher than at the start of the infection, due to the birth of puppies. The newly born puppies are yet protected against infection by maternal antibodies. Decrease of maternal antibodies will result in an increased susceptibility and as the virus is still circulating on most of the farms this will most likely lead to infection of the puppies. A second wave of infections is expected to last much longer than the first one (with only adult mink present) because of the large number of animals and the fact that they become gradually susceptible.

This persisting virus source would pose an increased risk for human health, especially when the epidemic in humans is controlled and measures will be lifted. In addition, in the coming period there will be many extra employees on the farms for vaccinating and taking care of the animals during weaning, and there are several uncertain factors that may increase the risk, such as the possibility of mutations in the virus.

Based this analysis the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, and the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality have decided to cull and destroy all mink on infected premises in order to avert the potential risks. Personnel working on mink farms should be tested when they show signs of COVID-19 or respiratory signs. All national measures regarding transport of mink and manure and hygiene measures remain in force

I will keep you informed about future developments.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Christianne Bruschke  
Chief Veterinary Officer of the Netherlands