

Animal Protection Groups Call for Congress, USDA to Shut Down Mink Farms in the U.S.

Today, animal protection groups called on Congress and the USDA to develop a buy-out of U.S. mink farmers, after COVID-19 outbreaks among the small mammals.

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Today, [Animal Wellness Action](#), the Animal Wellness Foundation, and the Center for a Humane Economy called on the Congress and the U.S.

Department of Agriculture to develop a plan and execute a national buy-out of U.S. [mink](#) farmers, after a series of COVID-19 outbreaks among the small

mammals in the two largest mink-producing states of Utah and Wisconsin. The plan would be modeled after similar government buy-outs of mink farms in the Netherlands and Spain, which also had mink-farm outbreaks.



Mink Farms Incubate Cruelty and COVID-19

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We know that mink farms are entirely unregulated from an animal welfare standpoint, produce a non-essential outer-wear garment, and are in decline because of the shifting tastes of global consumers”

Wayne Pacelle

“We know that mink farms are entirely unregulated from an animal welfare standpoint, produce a non-essential outer-wear garment, and are in decline because of the shifting tastes of global consumers,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy. “Now we know that these mink farms are hosts for the COVID virus and they are just not worth the risk.”

Mink seems to be among the most susceptible mammals in North America and Europe to COVID infections passed on to them by humans. The virus has killed at least 8,000

mink on farms throughout Utah, with the toll on Wisconsin mink farms in the hundreds and almost certainly climbing. For mink, death is almost immediate, occurring within 24 hours of

infection. There are currently 245 mink farms in the US spread out around 22 states. The industry produces about 3 million pelts each year, mainly for export.

While COVID-19 infections among humans in the US continue to rise, particularly in mid-western states, there is evidence from the Netherlands that the virus is “extremely likely” to have been transmitted from infected mink to humans. This means that workers in mink farms may be exposed to COVID-19 from infected animals. With the virus rapidly spreading among the mink industry, the call to put an end to mink fur farming is not only an issue of humane treatment of animals but a human health concern, particularly for the workers.

AWA is calling for an immediate ban on breeding more mink and transporting them between farms or exporting their fur internationally. In addition, AWA is calling for a government buy-out of the entire industry, as is being done on the Netherlands, as an emergency response to the COVID crisis. If Congress takes up a COVID package, the proposal should be considered.

“The U.S. annually doles out billions to help farmers maintain their livelihoods and to secure the food supply,” added Mr. Pacelle. “But the mink industry does not produce an essential food or clothing item, and animal welfare concerns are likely to accelerate its already rapid decline. Given the COVID health emergency in our nation, it’s time for Congress and USDA to intervene and provide an economic safety package for mink farmers while also quickly sunseting this industry.”

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that’s why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don’t. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Center for a Humane Economy (“the Center”) is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to

honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both.

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