

# Oregon Natural Resources Committee to Consider Nation's First Proposed Statewide Ban on Mink Farming

*Experts to testify that mink farms may incubate a new variant and act as viral superspreaders, given their unique susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2*

SALEM, OREGON, UNITED STATES, April 5, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A key Oregon Senate Committee will take up the nation's first proposed statewide ban on mink farming in the wake of a torrent of scientific findings underscoring the major role that mink farms may have in spreading COVID-19. Senator Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, is the sponsor of a bill to phase out mink farming within 270 days of

enactment and to provide support to the state's seven actively producing mink farmers. [Animal Wellness Action](#) and the Center for a Humane Economy proposed the legislation, which is attracting broad support from animal welfare groups, conservationists, and scientists.



Mink Farms Incubate Cruelty and COVID-19

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*Scott Beckstead*

Last week, the World Health Organization released its “Global Study of Origins of SARS-CoV-2: China Part Joint WHO-China Study 14 January-10 February 2021” ([Joint Report](#)) and noted that mink may be the potential reservoir or reservoir host of COVID-19 - and in fact could even be the primary source of COVID-19.

Other main points from the WHO report, specifically regarding mink and their role in SARS-CoV-2:

- Mink and COVID-19 mutations and outbreaks may go unnoticed;

- Mink may have been the intermediate host of COVID-19;
- Spillover to humans can occur indirectly through animal products and excreta;
- Infection and intraspecies transmission in farmed mink could lead to complex transmission pathways difficult to unravel and could create a year-round endemic transmission pattern.

Mink are highly susceptible to SARS-CoV-2, which spreads rapidly within high-density mink farms once introduced, by direct and indirect contact. High animal density on these industrial operations increases the chance for transmission.

Mink farm infections have been reported from Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Sweden. In the United States, perhaps as many as 20 percent of farms have seen infections. According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), between June 2020 and January 2021, Denmark reported over [1,000 human cases](#) of infection with a mink-related variant of the virus that spread from the North to the South, with estimates from Danish Authorities running as high as 4,000 human cases traced back to mink.

“The global pandemic that has resulted in millions of deaths started has its origins in the inhumane and severe exploitation of wildlife for commerce,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action. “There are robust efforts to address live-wildlife markets, but the United States and China are lagging badly in addressing the threat that mink factory farms pose. Addressing this problem must be a key feature of our continuing COVID-19 response.”

Denmark, the leading mink producer in the world, killed all of its 17 million captive after the Cluster-5 variant developed on mink farms there. “The global community dodged a viral bullet because of aggressive action by Denmark,” added Scott Beckstead, director of campaigns for the Center for a Humane Economy, and an Oregonian who grew up on an Idaho mink farm. “We’d be foolish not to pro-actively address this reservoir of highly vulnerable animals here given all we know about how mink factory farms can contract, transmit, and alter the virus.”

An outbreak of Covid-19 occurred on an Oregon mink farm in Clatsop County in August. Three mink escaped from the infected farm, and two of those animals tested positive, meaning they could have also infected native wild mink and other wildlife.

“Farmed mink may be key to the 2019 emergence of COVID-19 as the ‘missing link’ between bats and people in an Asian zoonotic perfect storm,” noted Jim Keen, D.V.M. Ph.D., a former senior USDA scientist who deployed to deal with outbreaks of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) in the U.K. in 2001 and African Swine Fever in western Asia some years later. “If we continue to farm mink by the millions and use their skins for topical decoration, they will likely remain a continual source of COVID virus variants. And if COVID spreads from farmed mink into the large wild and

feral mink populations across the northern hemisphere (deemed likely by the WHO), humans may be cursed with COVID risk forever.”

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 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.

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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