

# Rep. Rosa DeLauro Shepherds Sweeping Ban on Mink Farming through the U.S. House Citing Cruelty and Contagion Risks

NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT, USA, February 7, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Friday, in voting to approve the America COMPETES Act, the U.S. House of Representatives included a provision to ban mink farming throughout the United States, signaling disapproval of an industry that harms and kills animals for their pelts, exports them to China for a sliver of elite consumers, and presents a threat of SARS-CoV-2 spillover to people in the homeland.

The amendment was led by U.S. Representatives Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., Nancy Mace, R-S.C., and Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., and cosponsored by Reps. Jim Cooper, D-Tenn., Andy Levin, D-Mich., and Joe Neguse, D-Colo. It is a follow up to H.R. 4310, introduced by these same lawmakers and two dozen others from both parties, including Reps. Mike McCaul, R-Texas, Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., Lance Gooden, R-Texas, and Vern Buchanan, R-Fla.



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"There's nothing good about keeping aggressive and solitary wild mink in cages on factory farms, killing them for a product nobody needs, and then shipping their exteriors to luxury consumers in China," said Wayne Pacelle, president of [Animal Wellness Action](#) and the Center for a Humane Economy. "The case against mink farming is clinched when one understands a new variant from one or more of these factory farms may disrupt our economy and put millions of Americans at risk."

The amendment was approved as part of a larger bloc of amendments, including a separate measure to crack down globally on live wildlife markets because of infectious diseases risks they also pose.

"The factory farming of mink threatens public health, especially as we continue fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic," said Representative DeLauro. "The evidence is clear: mink operations can incubate and spread new COVID-19 variants and pose a unique threat of extending the

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pandemic. At the same time, with virtually no domestic market, the U.S. mink industry has been in steady decline for years. Now is the time for this legislation to become law, and I am urging all of my colleagues to continue supporting this bipartisan effort.”

“One of the many lessons we learned at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic is the real danger of animal-to-human transmission of disease. In fact, If COVID-19 could design its perfect habitat for mutation and transmission, it would closely resemble a mink farm, where thousands of mink are kept in small, often unsanitary, overcrowded cages, for days on end,” said Representative Mace. “Today,

through working together on both sides of the aisle, we have the chance to end the abusive and inhumane mink farming practice that puts Americans' health at risk.”

There have been approximately 6.1 million mink infected with SARS-CoV-2, with approximately 675,000 mink dying from the virus. This contrasts with perhaps just a few hundred COVID-19 infections among all other captive non-human animals, including big cats, domesticated dogs and cats, gorillas, and ferrets.

“This cage-confinement environment, where mink are crowded together by the thousands, maximizes chances for intraspecific aggression, viral infections, and mutations,” observed Jim Keen, D.V.M., Ph.D., director of veterinary sciences for the Center for a Humane Economy and a former infectious disease specialist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. “No amount of good animal husbandry can prevent this kind of aggression and the onset of disease among these captive, immune-compromised wild animals.”

Mink farms have already spawned three variants – in Denmark, France, and the United States. As such, they are a proven source of multiple novel virus variants that may compromise human vaccine effectiveness or increase human virus virulence or transmissibility. Mink are a top candidate as the “missing link” between bats which most scientists believe to be the original source of COVID, and people according to the World Health Organization.

USDA reported 2.7 million pelts sold in 2019, and 1.4 million mink pelts sold in 2020. According to a review by Animal Wellness Action, there are just 60 farms operating in the U.S. There is no domestic market for mink, and it is an export-market commodity only, with 80 percent of pelts sold to China.

“As one who grew up on and around mink farms, I can attest to the extreme aggression these creatures exhibit in their frustration with the miserable conditions on barren factory farm conditions,” said Scott Beckstead, director of campaigns for the Center for a Humane Economy.

The amendment was supported by Animal Wellness Action, the Animal Wellness Foundation, Center for a Humane Economy, the Michelson Center for Public Policy, SPCA International and dozens of other organizations, from the Idaho Humane Society to the Iowa Federation of Humane Societies to the Oregon League of Conservation Voters.

Animal Wellness Action (AWA) 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 (AWF) 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 (CHE) 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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