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CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 UPDATE (510): ANIMAL, MINK, LITHUANIA, POLAND, FIRST REPORTS, FRANCE, OIE

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A ProMED-mail post

<http://www.promedmail.org>

ProMED-mail is a program of the

International Society for Infectious Diseases

<http://www.isid.org>

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- [1] Lithuania: 1st reported COVID-19 outbreak in mink
- [2] Poland: 1st reported COVID-19 outbreak in mink
- [3] France: 1st COVID-19 outbreak in farmed minks, OIE

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- [1] Lithuania: 1st reported COVID-19 outbreak in mink

Date: Thu 26 Nov 2020

Source: EuroNews [edited]

<https://www.euronews.com/2020/11/26/lithuanian-authorities-find-first-coronavirus-cases-at-a-mink-farm>

Lithuanian authorities say they have detected the presence of the new coronavirus in mink at a farm in the centre of the country. The positive tests were found in samples of 169 dead minks at the farm in Jonava district, according to Lithuania's State Food and Veterinary Service (SFVS).

One person working at the farm has also tested positive for the coronavirus, the agency said.

"The results of the study show that the SARS-CoV-2 virus could have been transmitted to tissues by a farm worker," the director of the SFVS, Darius Remeika, said in a statement (<https://vmvt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje-patvirtintas-pirmasiskoronaviruso-atvejis-audiniu-ukyje>). "We urge all mink farms in the country to adhere strictly to all biosecurity requirements and to leave the workplace immediately."

According to the SFVS, the employee of the farm fell ill on Monday [23 Nov 2020], and all the employees who came into contact with them are in self-isolation.

The farm was immediately closed on Tuesday [24 Nov 2020], and any removal of animals, feed, or other animal products from the infected holding is prohibited.

A decision was also made to cull 22 infected cages of mink and to safely dispose of the carcasses in an animal by-products processing plant.

Unlike Denmark and Ireland [see comment], Lithuania has made no plans for a mass culling of its 1.6 million population of mink at around 86 breeding farms.

Around 60 000 animals are kept at the Jonava district farm, belonging to the companies UAB Danmink and AB Vilkijs ukis.

SFVS was notified of the increased mortality of the mink on Tuesday [24 Nov 2020] and submitted samples for testing to the laboratory of the National Institute for Food and Veterinary Risk Assessment. An additional 22 samples [collected] on Wednesday [25 Nov 2020] have also been confirmed with COVID-19.

Scientists have warned about the risk of a mutation of the virus in mink that could potentially affect the effectiveness of future vaccines against COVID-19. But the SFVS has cited advice from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control which states that the virus found in mink farms does not pose a risk to human health.

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[For the decision of the Irish government to discontinue the farming of minks, please refer to a BBC report, published 19 Nov 2020, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55002583>. According to the report, "3 mink farms in the Republic of Ireland have been told their mink are to be culled to halt a potential spread of a mutated form of coronavirus," since "authorities worry that a mutated form of coronavirus found in mink could potentially hamper the effectiveness of a future vaccine."

The report further said that "Ireland's Chief Medical Officer Tony Holohan has said the country's farmed mink population should be culled. In a letter to the Department of Agriculture, Dr Holohan said the presence of farmed minks presents 'an ongoing risk to public health' if the COVID variant found in Denmark was to become 'the dominant strain of the virus.'

He said all mink should be culled 'as a matter of urgency.'

Irish national broadcaster RTE said there are understood to be no immediate plans to carry out the proposed cull, but officials in the Department of Agriculture have informed farm owners in counties Laois, Kerry, and Donegal that it will happen.

There is already a commitment in the Programme for Government to phase out mink farming in Ireland." - Mod.AS]

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[2] Poland: 1st reported COVID-19 outbreak in mink

Date: Tue 24 Nov 2020

Source: EuroNews [edited]

<https://www.euronews.com/2020/11/24/polish-scientists-identify-first-cases-of-covid-19-at-a-mink-farm>

Polish scientists have identified the 1st cases of coronavirus in mink at a farm in the north of the country. The Medical University of Gdansk said on Tuesday [24 Nov 2020] that 8 animals were found to be infected at a breeding farm in the Pomeranian Voivodeship.

Scientists had examined throat swabs from 91 farmed mink in total for the presence of coronaviruses.

Poland, a major producer of mink fur, started coronavirus tests among its farmed mink and workers this month [November 2020]

after a mutation of the virus was found in Denmark.

The Danish government announced a nationwide cull of more than 15 million mink but later withdrew the order because it had no legal basis for those not contaminated by the virus. Hundreds of Danish farmers and mink breeders drove past the government's offices in Copenhagen to demonstrate against the measure.

Veterinary and sanitary authorities in Poland said last week that 18 coronavirus cases had been identified among mink farmworkers since the start of the pandemic, but that it was unlikely to have been spread by the animals.

"This is the 1st case of confirmed infection of farm animals with the SARS-CoV-2 virus in Poland," the Medical University of Gdansk said in a statement (<https://gumed.edu.pl/62412.html>). "The obtained results indicate the possibility of transmission of the virus from humans to minks. In-depth genetic research is currently underway to determine the probable origin of the virus and to enable comparison with known SARS-CoV-2 genetic sequences."

Scientists say the test swabs were subjected to a similar 2-gene test used in human diagnostics.

Various research centres across Europe have been studying for infections of COVID-19 in many animal species, including minks, rabbits, bats, and rodents.

As in Denmark, industry groups are likely to object to the test results over fears Poland could introduce a nationwide cull.

Poland is the world's 3rd-largest fur producer after China and Denmark, according to animal rights groups that are campaigning for an end to breeding animals like mink for fur.

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[3] France, 1st COVID-19 outbreak in farmed minks, OIE

Date: Mon 23 Nov 2020

Source: OIE, WAHIS [edited]

[https://www.oie.int/wahis\\_2/public/wahid.php/Reviewreport/Review?page\\_refer=MapFullEventReport&reportid=36748](https://www.oie.int/wahis_2/public/wahid.php/Reviewreport/Review?page_refer=MapFullEventReport&reportid=36748)

Information received on [and dated] 23 Nov 2020 from Dr Loic Evain, Directeur General adjoint, CVO, Direction generale de l'alimentation, Ministere de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation, Paris, France

Summary

Report type: immediate notification

Date of start of the event: 16 Nov 2020

Date of confirmation of the event: 20 Nov 2020

Reason for notification: emerging disease

Morbidity: 1 (scale 0 to 5)

Mortality: 0 (scale 0 to 5)

Zoonotic impact: no

Causal agent: SARS-CoV-2

New outbreaks (1)

Total outbreaks: 1

Total affected animals:

Outbreak location: Champrond en gatine, Champrond en gatine, Eure-Et-Loir

Date of start of the outbreak: 16 Nov 2020

Outbreak status: continuing (or date resolved not provided)

Epidemiological unit: farm

Total animals affected:

Species / Susceptible / Cases / Deaths / Killed and disposed of / Slaughtered

American mink: \_Neovison vison\_ (Mustelidae) / 4100 / - / 0 / 4100 / 0

Affected population: American minks bred for their fur in a farm. Evidence of contamination was established within the framework of programmed surveillance. 180 animals were sampled (blood and swabs). Out of 180 serological tests (ELISA), 174 tested positive. Out of 110 virological tests (PCR), 33 tested positive.

#### Epidemiology

Source of the outbreak(s) or origin of infection: unknown or inconclusive

Epidemiological comments: surveillance of the other 3 American mink farms identified on the French territory is ongoing; 1st results coming from these other breeder farms are negative.

#### Control measures

Measures applied: movement control inside the country, stamping out, disinfection, vaccination permitted (if a vaccine exists), no treatment of affected animals

Measures to be applied: no other measures

#### Diagnostic test results

Laboratory name and type / Species / Test / Test date / Result

Anses - Rabies and wildlife laboratory, Nancy (national laboratory) / American mink / competitive ELISA (c-ELISA) / 20 Nov 2020 / positive

Anses - Rabies and wildlife laboratory, Nancy (national laboratory) / American mink / real-time reverse transcriptase/polymerase chain reaction (RRT-PCR) / 20 Nov 2020 / positive

#### Future reporting

The event is continuing. Weekly follow-up reports will be submitted.

[The location of the outbreak can be seen on the interactive map included in the OIE report at the source URL above.]

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[Poland is one of the world's leading mink-farming countries. Details of previous samplings, the numbers of mink farms in Poland and Lithuania, and the size of their respective mink populations have not been disclosed.

OIE's guidance addressing COVID-19 in animals includes, among other articles, "General country information policy vs the disease." It presents the following requirements applicable to mink-farming countries (of which no official list is currently available) and information requested:

"1. Obligation of reporting the disease in the country/territory

2. Approach of the country in notification / testing. Which are the criteria used by the country to perform tests on animals?

Reasons why or the context in which animals were tested?

3. Control and prevention measures: approach to positive animals / preventive and control measures applied by the country

4. Risk communication established in the country

5. Animal population survey:

a. Ongoing animal population surveys in the country

b. Data collection methods

## 6. Sampling information

- a. Sampling strategy
- b. Number of samples collected

## 7. Testing information

- a. Details on testing (protocol, primers)
- b. Number of animals tested in the country
- c. Have full genome sequences been uploaded in public domain? If so, where?"

The full OIE Guidance is available at [https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/MM/A\\_Reporting\\_SARS-CoV-2\\_to\\_the\\_OIE.pdf](https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/MM/A_Reporting_SARS-CoV-2_to_the_OIE.pdf).

The outbreaks in Lithuania and Poland are yet to be officially reported to the OIE.

So far, OIE's database does not present a full list of member countries exercising mink (or other fur animals) farming. In view of the potential zoonotic hazard of COVID-19 in minks, considering the above OIE guidance becoming mandatory is warranted.

The Netherlands was the 1st country to apply systematic surveillance in farmed minks shortly after the detection of the 1st human-to-mink infection in North Brabant, late April 2020. Since then, COVID-19 continued its spread in the Dutch farmed mink while closely being monitored and studied, with findings published and shared continuously internationally. Spain experienced its 1st human-to-mink case on 27 Apr 2020 (reported in June 2020). Denmark had its 1st case on 15 Jun 2020; the samples were collected "because the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration had been informed about a person with contact to the farm who tested positive." Only after the publication of Denmark's recent findings and the concerns about mink-to-human infections with mink-mutated virus strains did other countries start their surveillance on mink farms. Such is the case currently in Poland, Lithuania, and France.

It may be asked if these 3 countries (of which 2 presented subclinical infection), as well as all other mink-farming countries that have not applied surveillance and are yet to report their 1st cases in minks, may have undergone unnoticed human-to-mink infections followed by SARS-CoV-2 circulation on farms since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in humans. Notably, in certain, if not most, mink-farming countries, the labour power on mink farms is multinational, of whom some have travelled once or more to their countries of origin. The resulting complex scenarios, with potential public health consequences, warrant internationally coordinated studies. - Mod.AS

HealthMap/ProMED-mail maps:

Lithuania: <https://promedmail.org/promed-post?place=7976927,120>

Poland: <https://promedmail.org/promed-post?place=7976927,113>

France: <https://promedmail.org/promed-post?place=7976927,100>

# See Also

COVID-19 update (507): animal, mink, Netherlands spread, Italy control 20201125.7972425

COVID-19 update (503): animal, France, mink, 1st rep 20201123.7965554

COVID-19 update (501): Denmark, Netherlands, mink, human-animal interface 20201122.7963766

COVID-19 update (490): animal, Greece (EM) mink, 1st report, OIE, assessment 20201115.7944705

COVID-19 update (498): Denmark, animal, mink, zoonotic 20201120.7959431

COVID-19 update (487): Denmark, animal, mink, zoonotic, risk assessment ECDC 20201112.7939110

COVID-19 update (482): animal, Denmark, mink, zoonotic, eradication, discussed 20201109.7929573

COVID-19 update (480): animal, USA (WI) mink 20201108.7923387

COVID-19 update (479): farmed animals, guidance, OIE 20201108.7926649

COVID-19 update (478): genome, mink, mortality rates, FDA, WHO, global 20201108.7925666

COVID-19 update (477): animal, Sweden, mink, spread, genotyping 20201107.7924269

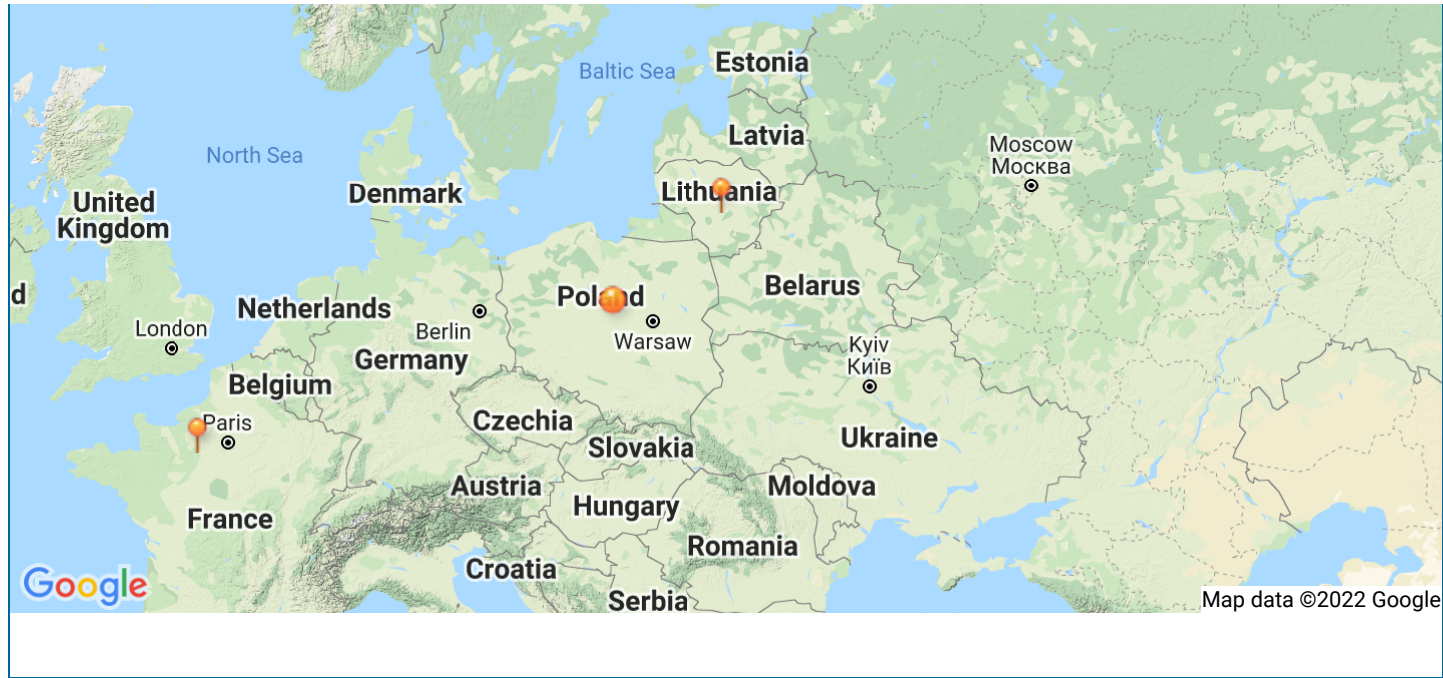
COVID-19 update (475): animal, Denmark, mink, spike protein sequences 20201106.7922587

COVID-19 update (473): animal, Denmark, mink, mutation, eradication, RFI 20201105.7918210  
COVID-19 update (471): animal, Denmark, mink, zoonotic, eradication 20201104.7916300  
COVID-19 update (468): animal, Sweden, mink, 1st rep, OIE 20201103.7912846  
COVID-19 update (464): animal, Denmark, mink, control, One Health 20201101.7906484  
COVID-19 update (461): animal, Sweden, mink, 1st case, RFI 20201030.7903582  
COVID-19 update (458): animal, Italy, mink, RFI 20201028.7897986  
COVID-19 update (445): animal, Netherlands, Denmark, mink, spread, epidemiology 20201019.7873326  
COVID-19 update (439): animal, Denmark, mink, spread, control 20201014.7861560  
COVID-19 update (437): animal, Netherlands, Denmark, mink, spread, control 20201013.7858915  
COVID-19 update (433): animal, Denmark (ND, MJ) farmed mink, spread, control 20201010.7851707  
COVID-19 update (430): animal, USA (UT) mink 20201009.7847704  
COVID-19 update (425): animal, Denmark (ND) farmed mink, spread, control 20201004.7835635  
COVID-19 update (414): animal, Netherlands (LI), Denmark (ND), farm mink, spread 20200925.7813579  
COVID-19 update (406): animal, Netherlands (LI), Denmark (ND), farm mink, spread 20200918.7794239  
COVID-19 update (401): Netherlands (NB), Denmark, farmed mink, spread 20200914.7777661  
COVID-19 update (394): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, spread 20200908.7759382  
COVID-19 update (387): Netherlands, mink, animal & public health, research 20200902.7740793  
COVID-19 update (382): Netherlands, animal, farmed mink, spread, control 20200830.7730463  
COVID-19 update (376): animal, ferret, mink, comment 20200827.7721923  
COVID-19 update (366): animal, USA (UT) mink 20200818.7692815  
COVID-19 update (363): animal, Denmark (ND) Netherlands (NB,LI) mink, spread 20200817.7687830  
COVID-19 update (340): animal, China, enviro monitoring, Netherlands (NB), mink 20200801.7635820  
COVID-19 update (334): animal, Netherlands, mink, spread, UK, cat, 1st rep, OIE 20200727.7617582  
COVID-19 update (324): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, spread 20200719.7591013  
COVID-19 update (317): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, spread 20200716.7578453  
COVID-19 update (307): Netherlands (NB), Denmark (ND) farmed mink, spread, control 20200708.7553067  
COVID-19 update (301): Denmark (ND) Netherlands (NB) farmed mink, spread, control 20200703.7536980  
COVID-19 update (284): Denmark (ND) animal, farmed mink, spread, dog 20200624.7506728  
COVID-19 update (281): Netherlands (NB, LI) farmed mink, spread, animal, global 20200623.7502849  
COVID-19 update (266): Denmark (ND) animal, farmed mink, 1st rep 20200617.7479510  
COVID-19 update (251): Netherlands (NB, LI) animal, farmed mink, spread, culling 20200610.7453845  
COVID-19 update (248): Netherlands (NB, LI) animal, mink, spread, culling, cat 20200609.7446478  
COVID-19 update (236): Netherlands (NB, LI) animal, farmed mink, spread, culling 20200604.7427849  
COVID-19 update (230): Netherlands (NB, LI) animal, farmed mink, spread, control 20200602.7420433  
COVID-19 update (215): Netherlands (NB) animal, mink-to-human, epidem., control 20200527.7385049  
COVID-19 update (209): Netherlands (NB) farmed mink, animal-to-human, cat, epid 20200525.7375359  
COVID-19 update (198): Netherlands (NB) farmed mink, animal-to-human infect susp 20200520.7359976  
COVID-19 update (189): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, research, cat, dog 20200517.7344274  
COVID-19 update (177): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, Spain (CT) cat susp 20200512.7328587  
COVID-19 update (174): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, comment 20200511.7323845  
COVID-19 update (169): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, spread, rabbit susp 20200509.7316646  
COVID-19 update (154): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, research 20200503.7294846  
COVID-19 update (146): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, epidemiology 20200501.7286113  
COVID-19 update (135): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink 20200427.7272289

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