



Published Date: 2020-12-13 15:51:22 CET

Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> COVID-19 update (535): Denmark, animal, mink, zoonotic, cat, RFI

Archive Number: 20201213.8015149

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 UPDATE (535): DENMARK, ANIMAL, MINK, ZOONOTIC, CAT, REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

A ProMED-mail post

<http://www.promedmail.org>

ProMED-mail is a program of the

International Society for Infectious Diseases

<http://www.isid.org>

In this update:

[1] Denmark, COVID-19, mink-to-human

[2] Denmark, COVID-19, cats

[1] Denmark, COVID-19, mink-to-human

Date: Mon 7 Dec 2020

Source: News release, Staten Serum Institut (SSI) [in Danish, machine trans. edited]

https://www.ssi.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/2020/12_fald-i-smitte-blandt-minkavlere_07122020

After a few weeks with many newly infected persons residing on mink farms (production or owner addresses), where as many as 8% (260 persons) were tested positive during weeks 46 and 47, there has been a marked decrease in the number of persons residing on mink farms infected with SARS-CoV-2. This is shown in the latest situation update by the Statens Serum Institut (SSI).

According to the memo, the number of newly infected persons associated with mink production fell to 28 in week 48 against 138 in week 47. Of the 28 infected, 3 were in the North Jutland Region, 10 in the Central Jutland Region, and 12 in the Southern Denmark Region.

Finally, there were 3 Covid-19 infected [persons] with connections to the same mink herd in Region Zealand.

Some of the newly infected persons are not associated with Covid-19 infected mink herds or mink herds in the killing zone. According to SSI, this means that there may have been SARS-CoV-2 in some of the herds that were not subject to restrictions.

"Therefore, there may be breeding animals left on these herds, as well as killed mink for fur that have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 at the time they were killed," says department head Tyra Grove Krause from SSI. She continues:

"As a result, personnel at the pelt preparing facilities may have been exposed to infection. That could explain why there have been Covid-19 outbreaks on 6 large and 2 smaller such facilities. But that, of course, is just one of several possible causes that are currently being investigated."

According to the memo, the Covid-19 outbreaks on the 8 pelt preparation facilities include 338 infected people, and the Danish Agency

for Patient Safety has this afternoon [Mon 7 Dec 2020] stated that this number has now increased to 402 infected people. The 8 outbreaks are currently being investigated by SSI's outbreak team, and it is expected that there will be sequence results related to the outbreaks on such facilities in the coming weeks.

In North Jutland, the number of detected cases of SARS-CoV-2 in society has fallen from 817 in week 44 to 268 in week 48. At the same time, however, the proportion of cases with the mink variant has increased from 17% in week 44 to 31% in week 47.

In the Central Jutland Region, the number of newly detected SARS-CoV-2 cases has fallen slightly from 1720 new cases in week 47 to 1528 in week 48. Of these, mink variants accounted for 31% in week 46 and 32% in week 47.

In the Region of Southern Denmark, the number of SARS-CoV-2 cases also decreased slightly from 1454 new cases in week 47 to 1296 new cases in week 48. Of these, mink variants of SARS-CoV-2 accounted for 11% in week 46 and 21% in week 47.

"However, the proportion of mink-related cases of Covid-19 is probably underestimated in the region, as there have been examples of infection with new virus types that are not closely related to the mink variant. We do not yet know the extent of these types, because we are currently working to include these in our analyzes," says Tyra Grove Krause.

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[Guidelines to Denmark's mink breeders/keepers and pelt processors have been published by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA), at <https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Dyr/Dyr-og-Covid-19/Mink-og-COVID-19/Sider/FAQ-om-pelsning.aspx>, under the heading "FAQ on fur and dead mink," (in Danish; machine translated). Some (selected; there are more) questions are:

1. My herd has been found infected. What should happen to fur and mink that are dead or furred before infection?
2. My crew is suspected of being infected with COVID-19. What should happen to fur and mink that are dead or [furred] before the suspicion arose?
(Reply: What should happen to fur and mink that are dead or already furred before the suspicion arose will depend on the outcome of the investigation).
3. What should happen to fur from healthy herds in the zones?
4. Is it allowed to use pelt preparation facilities within the 7.8 km zone from infected herds to fur killed, healthy mink from herds without special precautions for COVID-19?
(Reply: Yes. Pelt preparation facilities located within 7.8 km of mink herds infected with Covid-19 may well receive killed mink for fur. It is assumed that the killed mink come from herds that are not subject to restrictions for COVID-19. That is, from healthy herds more than 7.8 km from infected herds. However, one should be aware that the furs from the fur industry will come from areas where there are special precautions for COVID-19. It cannot be ruled out that the location of the fur plant [preparation facility] may affect the turnover of the furs. If the fur farm [such a facility] is in connection with a mink herd, mink on the herd must be killed and disposed of before the pelt preparation facility may receive killed mink for fur.
5. Is it allowed to fur [perform the pelt preparations] outside the zones?
(Reply: Yes, you are welcome to prepare the pelts [fur] outside the zones.
6. Can mink from infected herds be furred?
(Reply: No. Mink from infected herds must not be furred. This is because there is a risk that COVID-19 can be transmitted via killed mink and fur. The minks are killed so as not to spread the infection).
7. Why not use the fur when they cannot be infected?
(Reply: Infected mink cannot be furred because it is illegal to fur sick animals. With COVID-19, there is a risk of infection from both the mink body and the fur [pelt] in connection with the fur [pelt].
For precautionary reasons, it is also not permitted to fur non-infected mink from the [declared as infected] zones, as there is a risk that the mink may be infected at the time of killing).

For the above and additional questions and information, subscribers are encouraged to visit the DVFA website, applying -- if necessary -- machine translation. - Mod.AS]

[2] Denmark, COVID-19, cats

Date: Wed 9 Dec 2020

Source: Firstvet [in Danish; machine trans. edited]

<https://firstvet.com/dk/artikler/covid-19-og-smitte-hos-kaeledyr-sa-vidt-vi-ved-9-12-20>

It is not only mink that the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration has killed on mink farms in northwestern Jutland. The agency has also killed several cats on at least one infected mink farm in the area. However, DVFA cannot assess how great the risk is of infecting other cats. There is still no evidence that pets play a role in the spread of coronavirus.

Samples from feral cats from the area have been examined. No coronavirus or antibody has been detected in these animals. It is very important that no infected animals have been found outside the farms.

COVID-19 in pets is a notifiable disease. If you suspect that your pet may be infected, contact your veterinarian. And if the animal is tested positive, the veterinarian must report it to the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration.

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[Earlier, namely 27 Nov 2020, the following report was published by "The Newspaper Danmark" at

<https://avisendanmark.dk/artikel/fund-af-corona-virus-i-hunde-og-katte-f%C3%B8devarestyrelsen-afliver-katte-p%C3%A5-minkfarm-2020-11-27> (machine translated):

"The Statens Serum Institut confirms in an email to Dagbladet that as of 27 Nov 2020, samples from 33 cats from 7 Covid-19 infected mink farms have been examined."

On 2 of these mink farms, viruses were found in pharyngeal samples from the cats, and antibody-positive cats were also found on one of the farms.

"The one mink farm where we have detected virus in samples from cats is located in Holstebro Municipality. Viruses have been found in pharyngeal swabs from 12 out of 24 cats on the infected mink farm, and, in 13 of the cats, antibodies against Covid-19 have been found. Follow-up investigations regarding the type of virus in cats are underway and have not been completed," SSI writes in an email to Dagbladet.

So far, the above preliminary information, from a State-run institution, published in Denmark's 2nd-in-line private media source, has not been followed by a confirmation or otherwise in an official publication. Denmark's submissions to the OIE have addressed, as of today (13 Dec 2020) minks exclusively (see Denmark in OIE's COVID-19 Portal at <https://www.oie.int/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019-novel-coronavirus/events-in-animals/>). SARS-CoV-2 in cats has, so far, been reported to the OIE from 13 countries; details are available in the above OIE portal.

Updated information from Denmark on 2 pending issues is requested:

1. Has the decision to cull all of Denmark's minks, including breeding animals, as reported to the OIE on 5 Nov 2020, been revised? (https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/MM/Update_6_Letter_to_the_OIE_on_Sars-CoV-2_in_Denmark_5_november2020.pdf).

2. Has COVID-19 been identified in Denmark in animal species other than minks; details, including zoonotic aspects, will be helpful. - Mod.AS

HealthMap/ProMED map:

Denmark: <https://promedmail.org/promed-post?place=8015149,111>

See Also

COVID-19 update (530): animal, mink, research, experimental infection, vaccine 20201210.8009205
COVID-19 update (520): Denmark, Netherlands, mink, human-animal interface, WHO 20201204.7994061
COVID-19 update (501): Denmark, Netherlands, mink, human-animal interface 20201122.7963766
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 (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 (464): animal, Denmark, mink, control, One Health 20201101.7906484
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 (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 (376): animal, ferret, mink, comment 20200827.7721923
COVID-19 update (363): animal, Denmark (ND) Netherlands (NB,LI) mink, spread 20200817.7687830
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 (266): Denmark (ND) animal, farmed mink, 1st rep 20200617.7479510

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