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CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 UPDATE (319): SPAIN (ARAGON) ANIMAL, FARMED MINK, FIRST REPORT

A ProMED-mail post

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International Society for Infectious Diseases

<http://www.isid.org>

[1]

Date: Thu 16 Jul 2020

Source: Reuters [edited]

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-spain-minks/spain-to-cull-93000-mink-at-a-farm-hit-by-coronavirus-idUSKCN24H28U>

Health authorities have ordered the culling of all 93 000 mink at a farm in eastern Spain to prevent human contagion after discovering that most of the animals there had been infected with the coronavirus. The farm in the village of La Puebla de Valverde in the region of Aragon, 200 km (125 miles) east of Madrid, came to the attention of the authorities after the wife of one of its workers tested positive in May [2020]. Joaquin Olona, head of the Aragon agriculture department, told reporters on Thursday [16 Jul 2020] that 7 farm workers had subsequently tested positive, including the woman's husband.

Authorities initially ordered that the animals should be isolated. But a few weeks later, after several rounds of testing, they decided to cull the mink, which are farmed for their fur. As many as 80% of a sample of the animals tested positive.

The management of Secapiel, the company that runs the region's only mink farm, was not immediately available for comment. The company will receive financial compensation for the culling, authorities said.

Cases of mink with coronavirus were identified in Denmark, the world's largest producer, and the Netherlands and, even though the animals did not show any symptoms, hundreds of thousands were culled to prevent farmers from becoming infected.

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[2]

Date: Thu 16 Jul 2020 19:55 CEST

Source: Heraldito [in Spanish, trans., edited]

<https://www.heraldo.es/noticias/aragon/2020/07/16/la-dga-sacrifica-los-92-700-visones-de-la-granja-de-la-puebla-de-valverde-por-estar-infectados-de-covid-1386331.html>

The "drastic decision", as the counsellor of agriculture, livestock and environment, Joaquín Olona, described it on Thursday [16 Jul 2020], was made on Wednesday night. The DGA [Government of Aragon] has ordered the compulsory slaughter of all mink that the Secapiel company raises on a farm in Puebla de Valverde (Teruel). Animals carrying the coronavirus have been detected in it, although none of them have shown symptoms of the disease nor has there been evidence of an abnormal mortality among the specimens on the farm.

This Teruel enterprise, the only one in Aragon dedicated to this activity, has been immobilized since 22 May 2020, the date on which 7 of its workers tested positive for COVID-19. A follow-up led eventually to the decision of the Aragonese Executive [DGA], "given the high moment of uncertainty" and the possibility that "the farm would become a reservoir for the virus".

After the contagion of the workers, Olona reported, the tests were carried out on the animals. The 1st tests, among a random sample, were carried out on 28 May 2020 and were sent to the Algete laboratory (Madrid), a reference point for diagnosing animal diseases. The results, which arrived on 3 Jun [2020], were negative.

Despite this, the Government of Aragon decided to continue keeping the company immobilized. There was a new test on 8 Jun [2020]. The result was positive "inconclusive", so the measures and monitoring of the animals were extended, until -- on 22 Jun 2020 -- a new test, carried out on 30 specimens, revealed 5 animals infected, which represented 16% of the sample. "At the time we thought the immobilization was justified, but we did not believe the situation was serious enough to justify such a drastic measure," Olona added. But the situation changed on [13 Jul 2020], when results of tests on samples obtained on [7 Jul 2020] were received. Of the 90 specimens, 78 (86.67%) were found positive, "for which reason it had to be acknowledged that there was community transmission among some animals that were absolutely immobilized," highlighted the adviser.

Therefore, "as a preventive measure" and as contemplated in the law, the 92 700 minks raised on this farm will be euthanized with gas and destroyed in an SRM [specified risk material] disposal plant while all the required biosecurity measures adhered to. The head of agriculture and the general director of animal production, have insisted that "no abnormal behavior, mortality, or any pathology had been detected among the animals". Although they insisted that "everything is a hypothesis", they recognize that it cannot be determined whether was transmission from humans to animals or vice versa, but "it may have occurred". Even Olona said that "there are 2 human cases that could be related".

The counsellor has recognized the "enormous economic damage" of this measure -- which includes compensation -- to the company that owns the farm, which, as he stressed, complied from the 1st moment with the health requirements and showed "full collaboration with the decisions of the government".

[byline: Chus Farcia]

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[3]

Date: Fri 17 Jul 2020

Source: fr24News/CNN [edited]

[https://www.fr24news.com/a/2020/07/spain-orders-slaughter-of-nearly-100000-farmed-mink-after-animals-test-positive-for-covid-](https://www.fr24news.com/a/2020/07/spain-orders-slaughter-of-nearly-100000-farmed-mink-after-animals-test-positive-for-covid-1386331.html)

19.html

Can animals transmit COVID-19 to humans?

This is not the 1st mink farm to have seen a coronavirus epidemic. In May [2020], Dutch authorities introduced mandatory tests on all mink farms in the Netherlands after declaring that they thought a mink could have infected a human with COVID-19. The tests led to the slaughter of a million minks in the country on 2 dozen farms, according to the Humane Society International animal welfare charity. "Based on new findings from ongoing research into COVID-19 infections in mink farms, it is plausible that an infection has occurred from mink to humans," the Dutch government said at the time. "It also emerges from this research that mink can have COVID-19 without showing symptoms."

The Dutch government has also said it believes cats can play a role in spreading the virus between farms. "Ongoing research shows that the viruses from 2 of the infected farms are very similar," the statement said. COVID-19 was found in 3 out of 11 cats on a mink farm, the report said.

The virus has been seen in a variety of other animals, including a number of tigers at the Bronx Zoo in New York in April [2020] and a dog in Hong Kong.

According to the World Health Organization, although it is not possible to pinpoint the source of the virus, it probably comes from bats. However, more research is needed to determine how the virus potentially spreads from animals to humans, as the role of animals in the spread of the virus remains unclear.

[byline: CNN Mick Krever, Rob Picheta, Julia Hollingsworth contributed to this story]

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[HealthMap/ProMED map of Spain: <https://promedmail.org/promed-post?place=7584560,4195>. For the location of Teruel, see the map at <https://tinyurl.com/y6ykevtb>.

We are indebted to Dr Christian Griot, director, Institute for Virology and Immunology, Mittelhäusern, Switzerland for the submission of an additional recent source addressing the Spanish event (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53439263>). He added the following comment: "After Denmark and the Netherlands, now a mink farm in Spain. I wonder what will happen once the 1st mink farm in Finland is reported to be positive. To me the spread is puzzling, and I am not sure if it is "just the worker" of a farm, which infects the animals. In Spain, 80% of the animals were found to be positive. This tells me that the virus is highly adapted to the mink (and might be the missing link between bats and humans). I assume that feedstuff has been excluded in all the previous outbreaks in Europe." Dr Griot's comment is appreciated.

The investigational efforts in the named mink farm were ignited by COVID-19 cases in humans; initially, the wife of one of the farm's workers was diagnosed as a COVID-19 patient; she was followed by 7 infected workers of the farm. This led, eventually, to the detection of SARS-CoV-2 infection in 80% of the (tested) animals. The whole animal population reportedly remained asymptomatic throughout the entire period, their culling being decided as "a precautionary measure" to prevent the establishment of a source for human infection. The source of infection in the farm personnel has not been established. This, in difference with the Dutch event, where genotyping of the virus was indicative in 2 human cases, of suspected animal to human infection.

Several aspects of the event above are noteworthy:

1. The event involved the only mink farm in Aragon; Spain's cluster of mink farms is located in Galicia, some 500-600 km [311-373 mi] to the north west of Teruel. Are tests for COVID-19 being applied there?
2. Europe's leading clusters of mink farms are located in Denmark, Poland, the Netherlands, Finland, and Greece; there are several additional European countries with mink farming. The Netherlands initiated surveillance for COVID-19 in all its mink holdings; Denmark, the world's leading mink producer, applies selective surveillance. No information is available from the others.
3. Similarly, no information on COVID-19 surveillance is available from other continents where mink farming is practised. This applies, in

In view of the suggested absence of clinical signs and excessive mortality in the Teruel event, surveillance is warranted if the freedom of mink farms from COVID-19, particularly as a potential source of human infection, is desired. - Mod.AS]

See Also

- 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 (267): animal, domestic, wild, cat, research 20200617.7480013
- 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 (238): USA (MN) animal, cat 20200605.7429133
- 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 (227): animal, cat, dog, research, experimental infection 20200601.7416648
- COVID-19 update (215): Netherlands (NB) animal, mink-to-human, epidem., control 20200527.7385049
- COVID-19 update (212): Russia (Moskva) animal, cat, OIE 20200526.7379578
- 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 (183): Japan/USA, animal, research, cat, experimental infection 20200514.7337185
- COVID-19 update (181): Germany (BY), France (AC), cat, OIE animal case definition 20200513.7332909
- COVID-19 update (177): Netherlands (NB) animal, farmed mink, Spain (CT) cat susp 20200512.732858
- 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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