

I submit the following information, crafted by national organizations and not complete due to the word limitation, in support of this bill. I urge you to support this bill for the following reasons;

**MINK FARMS: A CRUEL AND DYING INDUSTRY MAY EXTEND A GLOBAL PANDEMIC
MINKS' SUSCEPTIBILITY TO COVID-19 MAKES THEM A SERIOUS RISK**

For reasons still not fully understood, mink are especially susceptible to the novel coronavirus. Four of the top five mink-farming states in the U.S. – Michigan, Oregon, Utah, and Wisconsin – experienced outbreaks that began with infected farm workers and that led to thousands of COVID-19 infections among captive mink. Utah alone had outbreaks at 13 farms. Similar outbreaks occurred at more than 400 farms in Europe, including 13 farms in Sweden as reported in late January, where authorities shuttered mink farms to stop them from turning into viral super-spreaders. After the emergence of the Cluster-5 variant at mink farms there, Denmark ordered the killing of 17 million mink – nearly 40 percent of the global mink industry.

FACTORY MINK FARMS: INHUMANE BREEDING GROUNDS FOR A PANDEMIC

Mink farms are factory farms in every sense, with the average operation housing thousands of animals in barren, cramped, and crowded conditions. Mink are largely solitary mammals, and as wild animals, they retain their innate behaviors, including the desire to wander and roam over vast areas in a semi-aquatic environment. When crowded in cages in densities that are unlike anything they've ever experienced in the wild, the mink experience frustration and stereotyped behaviors, and may resort to cannibalism, self-mutilation, and infanticide. Some types of mink are highly susceptible to stress and die when there are minor disruptions in their social environment. Confining and overcrowding mink in an industrial setting also creates an ideal environment for an innovative and aggressive pathogen like the novel coronavirus to infect, spread, and even mutate.

THE THREAT TO HUMAN HEALTH IS REAL AND GROWING

There is now evidence from studies in Denmark and the Netherlands that not only is the virus capable of being transmitted from mink to human, but it may do so in a mutated form. 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 virus¹ that spread from the North to the South, with estimates from Danish authorities as many as 4,000 human cases caused by mink variants.²

¹ European Food and Safety Authority and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Anette Boklund et al, Monitoring of SARS-CoV-2 infection in mustelids, Scientific Report, EFSA Journal, Jan, 2021, doi: 10.2903/j.efsa.2021.6459
<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/j.efsa.2021.6459>

² Id.