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# Mink infected with the coronavirus escapes Oregon fur farm

By April Ehrlich (Jefferson Public Radio)

Dec. 29, 2020 9:19 a.m.



A wild American mink.

Sergey Ryzhkov / Wikimedia Commons

A mink caught outside a farm in Oregon in mid-December has tested positive for low-levels of the coronavirus.

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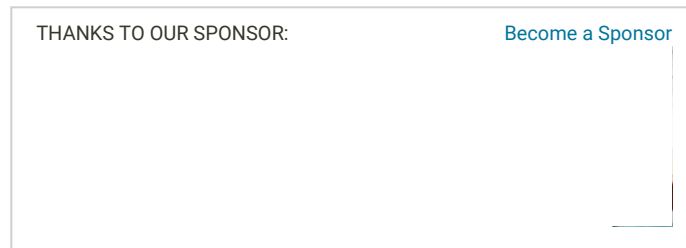
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State officials say the mink escaped from a small farm that was already under quarantine because of a coronavirus outbreak among mink and humans.

In a [press release](#), the Oregon Department of Agriculture said it won't disclose where the farm is located, citing medical privacy laws.

The Center of Biological Diversity, an environmental group, says mink that escape from fur farms could potentially spread the virus to other wildlife.

**Related:** [Mink are catching the coronavirus on farms — including one in Oregon](#)



“Mink are related to a range of other species, including badgers, martens, fishers, weasels, otters, and wolverines,” said Jonathan Evans, the center’s environmental health legal director. “So we know that escaped mink or mink factory farms themselves can oppose disease risks for wild animals.”

The virus could also infect animals that eat an infected mink or its feces.

State-hired biologists trapped the mink along with eight other animals, including five opossums and three cats. Only the mink tested positive for the virus.

State officials said there isn’t any evidence that the coronavirus is spreading among wildlife.

“Still, we are taking this situation very seriously and continuing to survey and trap near the farm,” Ryan Scholz, Oregon Department of Agriculture state veterinarian, wrote in a press release.

The Center for Biological Diversity is calling on the state to provide more information about coronavirus outbreaks at mink farms. There are 11 in Oregon.

“Government officials really need to be reporting more about where these disease outbreaks are occurring — where are these mink farms that are having these COVID outbreaks — and reporting that information in real-time to the public,” Evans said.



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as a reason to ban mink fur production and sales in the state.

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## Mink are catching the coronavirus on farms — including one in Oregon

Mink have proven to be particularly susceptible to the coronavirus. Following outbreaks of the virus on mink farms in Europe and the United States, Oregon has now reported an outbreak affecting both mink and human on one of the state's 11 mink farms. Oregon Department of Agriculture's state veterinarian, Dr. Ryan Scholz, talked to OPB about how he's responding to the outbreak.

Dec. 8, 2020

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