

Please support high-quality local journalism. Subscribe to OregonLive.

Advertisement

Coronavirus

Oregon mink trapped in wild tests positive for coronavirus, raising fears of ‘mutant viral strain’

Updated Dec 25, 2020; Posted Dec 25, 2020



All mink in Denmark are being culled due to a government order after the coronavirus swept through factory farms.

1,646
shares

By [Douglas Perry | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

An Oregon mink trapped in the wild tested positive for the coronavirus this month, the Oregon Department of Agriculture [announced Wednesday](#).

The mink was captured Dec. 13 near an Oregon mink farm that is under quarantine after a November COVID-19 outbreak there. State and federal wildlife officials believe the trapped mink had recently escaped from the farm.

“There is no evidence that SARS-CoV-2 is circulating or has been established in the wild,” ODA state veterinarian Dr. Ryan Scholz said in a statement. “Several [trapped] animals from different species were sampled, and all others were negative. Still, we are taking this situation very seriously and continuing to survey and trap near the farm.”

Advertisement

Lori Ann Burd, environmental health director at the Center for Biological Diversity, does not find the state's response reassuring.

“It's beyond outrageous that an infected mink can escape even from a quarantined fur farm, putting an untold range of wild animals at risk of contracting the virus,” she said. “As much as I hope this case of COVID-19 is just limited to the one mink they tested in the wild, we know this virus is highly contagious and that one case quickly grows to many.”

Infected mink are an under-the-radar but growing problem in the battle against the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 300,000 Americans this year. In November, Denmark announced it would kill all 17 million of the mink raised there after

it was discovered that 12 people had been infected with a mutated strain of COVID-19 that had spread from mink to humans.

Coronavirus outbreak reported on Oregon mink farm

In [a guest opinion column](#) in The Oregonian/OregonLive earlier this month, Burd warned that infected mink at the quarantined Oregon farm could “not only spread the virus among wild mink but give rise to a mutant viral strain that threatens to compromise our newly minted vaccines.”

She said this week that Oregon regulators need to “quit pretending they have everything under control when nothing could be further from the truth.”

In November, [10 samples from mink](#) at the quarantined Oregon farm tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19 in humans. The mink are believed to have contracted the virus from humans. Some workers at the farm also tested positive for the coronavirus. State officials have not revealed where the farm is located.

Oregon has 11 permitted mink farms with a total of nearly 500,000 animals. Eight of Oregon’s mink farms are in Marion County, two are in Clatsop County and one is in Linn County, [reports the Salem-based agricultural newspaper Capital Press](#).

ODA reported this week that the mink at the quarantined Oregon farm “are now clear of the virus.” State officials said the animals will undergo another round of testing before the farm’s restrictions are lifted.

Open trapping season for mink began Nov. 15 in Oregon.

-- Douglas Perry

dperry@oregonian.com

[@douglasmperry](#)

Note to readers: if you purchase something through one of our affiliate links we may earn a commission.

Around the web

Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#), [Privacy Policy and Cookie Statement](#), and [Your California Privacy Rights](#) (each updated 1/1/21).

[Cookies Settings](#)

© 2021 Advance Local Media LLC. All rights reserved ([About Us](#)).

The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of Advance Local.

[Community Rules](#) apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site.



[▶ Ad Choices](#)