

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** Denmark to Cull One Million Mink Due to Coronavirus

**Country:** Denmark

**Post:** The Hague

**Report Category:** Livestock and Products, Agriculture in the News, Agricultural Situation

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**Report Highlights:**

Denmark is the world's largest producer of mink skins. The country began instituting a series of protective measures in the summer of 2020 to limit the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) on Danish mink farms, but outbreaks have persisted. After an increase in cases in late September, the Danish government has opted to cull mink farms infected with COVID-19, those suspected of being infected, as well as healthy herds within a radius of 8 kilometers of an infected herd. In total, roughly one million mink are expected to be culled over the coming months. While the government's decision was supported by the Danish Mink Breeders Association, the industry has expressed disappointment with the Government's compensation program.

## Background

After the [Danish Patient Safety Authority](#) identified a patient in June 2020 with coronavirus (COVID-19) who was associated with a mink farm in North Jutland, samples were taken from 34 mink on the farm. Analysis of the samples was conducted by the [Danish State Serum Institute](#), and the Danish government subsequently confirmed the presence of the virus among the farm's mink population. For additional information, see [DA2020-004: Government to Cull Mink on COVID-19 Infected Farm in North Jutland](#).

Subsequently, the Danes identified five additional mink farms with the presence of COVID-19 (bringing the total number of infected mink farms in early September 2020 to six):

- An infection on a farm in North Jutland identified on June 29, 2020;<sup>1</sup>
- An infection on a farm in Hjørring municipality identified on July 1, 2020;<sup>2</sup>
- An infection on a farm in Hjørring Municipality identified on August 14, 2020;<sup>3</sup>
- An infection on a farm in North Jutland identified on August 26, 2020;<sup>4</sup> and,
- An infection on a farm in Hirtshals Municipality identified on September 2, 2020.<sup>5</sup>

While instituting a series of protective measures, the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA) and the Danish health authorities assessed that it was justifiable to let infected herds live because the risk of spreading infection to humans is minimal. For additional information, see [DA2020-008: Sixth Danish Mink Farm Infected by Coronavirus](#).

## Increase in Detections in September 2020 Leads to Decision to Cull

However, in late September the number of cases on Danish mink farms had significantly increased. On October 1, 2020, Danish Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, [Mogens Jensen](#), noted 41 mink farms had been infected with coronavirus in North Jutland, and an additional 20 herds were under suspicion.<sup>6</sup> One week later, those numbers had increased to “58 mink farms that have been found infected with COVID-19 in North Jutland, and more than 46 farms... under suspicion.”<sup>7</sup>

Minister Jensen stated, “{w}e have continuously launched initiatives to manage and contain the spread of infection. In view of the recent large increase, we must unfortunately state that it has not been sufficient to prevent continued spread of infection among the North Jutland mink herds.”<sup>8</sup> [Kåre Mølbak](#), the Executive Vice President and Director of the Division of Infectious Diseases Preparedness of the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Nyheder/Aktuelt/Sider/Nyheder%202020/Nye-pr%C3%B8ver-i-nordjyskminkbes%C3%A6tning-viste-fund-af-COVID-19-i-mange-mink-.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Nyheder/Aktuelt/Sider/Nyheder%202020/F%C3%B8dearestyrelsen-finder-COVID-19-i-en-3--nordjysk-mink-bes%C3%A6tning.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Nyheder/Aktuelt/Sider/Pressemeddelelser%202020/Fjerde-minkfarm-smittet-med-COVID19.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Nyheder/Aktuelt/Sider/Pressemeddelelser%202020/Nyt-fund-af-COVID-19-i-mink.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Nyheder/Aktuelt/Sider/Pressemeddelelser%202020/Sjette-minkfarm-smittet-med-COVID-19.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.tvmidtvest.dk/tv-2/mogens-jensen-over-en-million-mink-skal-aflives>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.maskinbladet.dk/politik-erhverv/artikel/69700-minkavlforening-kritiserer-kompensationsafregning>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/51-minkfarme-er-smittet-med-corona-42-er-under-mistanke>

Danish State Serum Institute, added that “data indicate that there is a significantly greater risk of becoming infected if you are a mink farmer than if you are a nurse or doctor.”<sup>9</sup>

Accordingly, Minister Jensen announced the Danish government had decided to cull mink farms infected with COVID-19, or suspected of being infected with COVID-19, as well as healthy herds within a radius of 8 kilometers (5 miles) of an infected herd. Minister Jensen added that “it is the right thing to do, even though it is sad for both animals and humans.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Danish Mink Breeders Supported the Government’s Decision to Cull**

Tage Pedersen, Chairman of Danske Minkavlere (the Danish Mink Breeders Association), commented:

It is a difficult decision that the government has made, but we fully support it. In recent weeks, we have all experienced that more and more farms in North Jutland have been infected, and no one has been able to explain the increase. Human health must come first. As a profession, we do not want to be a source of anxiety in the local community. We know that there have been strong reactions in North Jutland because the surroundings are worried. Based on professional assessments, the authorities have had a belief that the infection could be contained, and we have all had a clear expectation that it would have been better than the picture we see now. For the affected growers, the last few weeks have been terrible. The uncertainty has been all-consuming for the individual breeders, employees, and their families. Some of my members have had to look after their animals, while they themselves have been very ill with corona. They did not know if they could fur in just a month's time from now on - and thus preserve their business and their income, or if they should leave the farm.<sup>11</sup>

### **Mink Breeders will be Compensated for the Losses, but are Dissatisfied with the Plan**

The DVFA, together with the Danish Emergency Management Agency, will be responsible for the culling (a process which may take months). Danish media reports that mink breeders can choose to have the compensation paid out immediately, on the basis of a standardized loss price, or receive compensation which will be determined when next year's mink skin prices are known.<sup>12</sup> Mink farms with confirmed infection will receive 20 percent compensation for their operating loss, while farms without infection will receive full compensation (a maximum has been set by the government of 199 kroner per skin { $\$31.45$ }).<sup>13</sup>

Kopenhagen Fur, the world’s largest fur auction house which is owned by the Danish mink breeders, is reportedly dissatisfied with the compensation scheme developed by the Ministry of the Environment and Food. Moreover, the Danske Minkavlere called the model unreasonable, arguing the compensation is

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/inland/kaare-moelbak-smittersikoen-minkavlere-er-stoerre-end-laeger-og-sygeplejersker>

<sup>10</sup> [Id.](#)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.danskeminkavlere.dk/nyheder/2020/oktober/danske-minkavlere-hilser-aflivning-velkommen/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://landbrugsavisen.dk/corona-aflivning-af-mink-kan-begynde-aftale-p%C3%A5-plads>

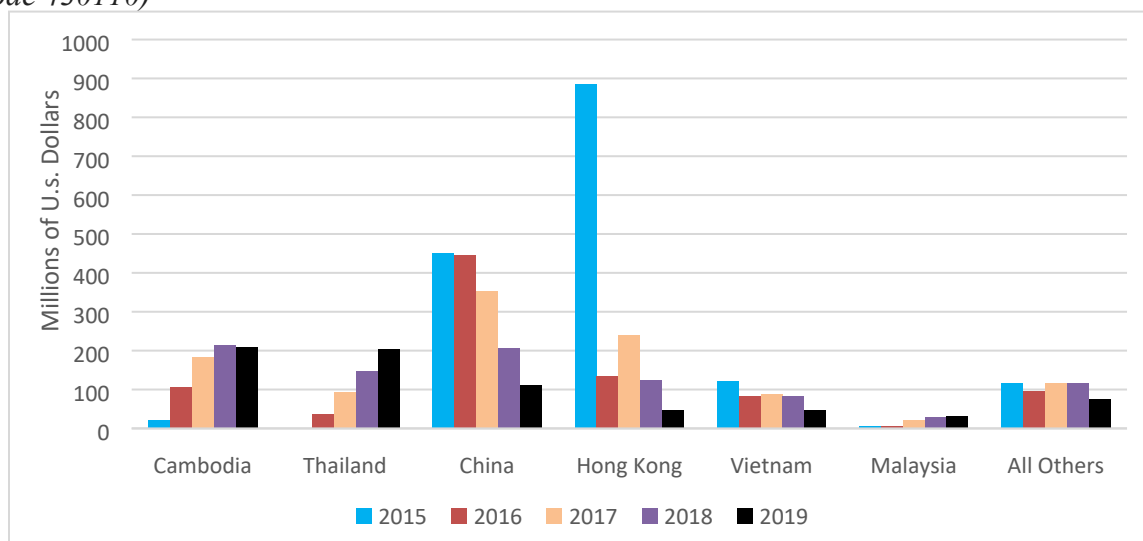
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.maskinbladet.dk/politik-erhverv/artikel/69700-minkavlereforening-kritiserer-kompensationsafregning>

insufficient to help infected farms repopulate next year.<sup>14</sup> However, Minister Jensen has remarked the mink breeders receive compensation, and they do so according to a set of rules that exists and has been used many times.<sup>15</sup> He added that there is no difference between this situation and other situations where animal herds have had to be slaughtered.<sup>16</sup>

### Denmark is the World’s Largest Producer of Mink Skins

The Danish Agriculture and Food Council (DAFC) reports “1,500 Danish fur farmers produce approximately 19 million mink skins. In addition to mink, Denmark also produces a small number of fox, chinchilla and rabbit skins.”<sup>17</sup> The DAFC adds that “{f}ur and mink skins are the third largest Danish agricultural export items of animal origin, representing an annual export value of approximately €1.1 billion {\$1.3 billion}.”<sup>18</sup>

*Annual Value of Danish Exports of Mink Furskins, Raw, Whole, With or Without Head, Tail or Paws (HS Code 430110)*



Source: Trade Data Monitor

### Attachments:

No Attachments.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.maskinbladet.dk/politik-erhverv/artikel/69700-minkavlerforening-kritiserer-kompensationsafregning>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/regionale/nordjylland/minkavlere-staerkt-utilfredse-med-kompensation-jeg-kommer-ikke-til>

<sup>16</sup> [Id.](#)

<sup>17</sup> <https://agricultureandfood.dk/danish-agriculture-and-food/mink-and-fur>

<sup>18</sup> [Id.](#)