

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** Government to Cull All Mink in Denmark Due to COVID-19

**Country:** Denmark

**Post:** The Hague

**Report Category:** Agricultural Situation, Agriculture in the News, Pest/Disease Occurrences

**Prepared By:** FSA/The Hague Staff

**Approved By:** Christopher Riker

**Report Highlights:**

In the summer of 2020, the first mink farms in North Jutland were infected with coronavirus (COVID-19). In response, the Danish government instituted various measures to stop the virus from spreading. Despite the Government's efforts, the virus continued to spread and eventually mutated. By early November, the virus had spread to 216 farms spread across Jutland, and, according to the National Health Institute, one variant that can spread to humans was identified as being less susceptible to a future vaccine. As a result, the Danish Government made the difficult decision to cull the country's entire mink population (as many as 17 million head).

## Background

With roughly 1,200 farms, Denmark is the world's largest producer of mink skins. In addition to mink, Denmark also produces a small number of fox, chinchilla and rabbit skins. Copenhagen Fur, the largest fur auction house in the world, sells Danish mink skins and an additional seven million skins from other countries, annually. Fur and mink skins are the third largest Danish agricultural export item of animal origin, representing an annual export value of approximately €1.1 billion (\$1.30 billion).<sup>1</sup>

## COVID-19 Appears on Mink Farms in Jutland

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. The [Danish State Serum Institute](#) conducted analyses of the samples. The Danish Government later confirmed the presence of the virus among the farm's mink population. For additional information, see [DA2020-0004: 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). 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 the infection to humans was believed to be minimal. For additional information, see [DA2020-0008: Sixth Danish Mink Farm Infected by Coronavirus](#).

## Denmark Reinstates Culling Program

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>2</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>3</sup> Accordingly, Minister Jensen announced the Danish Government had decided to cull mink farms infected with COVID-19, or that were suspected of being infected with COVID-19, as well as healthy herds within a radius of 8 kilometers (5 miles) of an infected herd. For additional information, see [DA2020-0011: Denmark to Cull One Million Mink Due to Coronavirus](#).

<sup>1</sup> <https://agricultureandfood.dk/danish-agriculture-and-food/mink-and-fur>

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

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.maskinbladet.dk/politik-erhverv/artikel/69700-minkavlerforening-kritiserer-kompensationsafregning>

## Decision to Cull the Herd

On November 4, 2020, Denmark's Prime Minister, Mette Frederikson, announced that all mink on Danish mink farms are to be preventively culled after a mutated version of the coronavirus had begun to spread in the country. Previous measures implemented by the Government in an attempt to contain the virus had proved insufficient. Her decision also came after the Danish State Serum Institute warned that the "mutated virus among mink may involve the risk that the upcoming vaccine will not work as it should."<sup>4</sup>

On November 5, 2020, the Danish State Serum Institute reported:

...variants of the virus have been detected in 214 people among 5,102 samples that have been completely sequenced from week 24 to week 42. This is the period when there has been an outbreak of {COVID-19} among mink.

During this period, a total of 37,967 infections have been detected, so the proportion of sequenced samples is 13%. Out of the 214, these mink variants have been found in 200 people in the North Jutland Region (94%). During this period, 535 samples have been sequenced in North Jutland. This means that mink variants have been detected in 40% of the samples. In addition, 14 people have been infected with these mink variants outside of North Jutland, where 4,568 samples were sequenced during the period, corresponding to 0.3% of the samples.

Cluster 5<sup>5</sup> {of the} virus was found on five mink farms and in 12 samples in August and September. Of these, 11 {were} from North Jutland and 1 person on {the island of} Zealand. Overall, this suggests that infection with mink variants is so far primarily a problem in North Jutland, closer to the infected farms.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the spread of the so-called "Cluster 5 mutation," the Government has also imposed movement restrictions across county lines for people living in seven municipalities in North Jutland.<sup>7</sup>

## What Next?

The remaining farms will be cleared as soon as possible. The Danish Minister of Trade and Industry, Simon Kollerup, has noted that affected farmers will be fully compensated, with a bonus for expeditious culling -- DKK 20 for each mink if the farmer cull his herds within 10 days – or within 5

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/alle-danske-mink-skal-aflives-af-frygt-virusmutation>

<sup>5</sup> The Danish State Serum Institute said: "{s}o far, five different groups or clusters of mink variants have been found in Denmark (clusters 1-5). Among these mink variants, seven different mutations have been seen in the so-called spike protein on the coronavirus surface, and there are examples of up to four different changes in the spike protein in the same virus. The spike protein is essential, as it is the protein that viruses use to penetrate a cell. Following a natural infection, humans develop antibodies to the spike protein. The potential COVID-19 vaccine candidates are also based on this important protein. Therefore, there is a risk that the effect of spike-based anti-COVID19 vaccines may be affected when there are changes in the spike protein on the viruses that the vaccine is to fight." See <https://www.ssi.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/2020/mutationer-i-minkvirus>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/denmark-tightens-lockdown-over-mink-coronavirus-mutation/a-55513862>

days for herds under 7,500 animals.<sup>8</sup> Information on additional compensation schemes can be found online at: <https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/Dyr/Dyr-og-Covid-19/Mink-og-COVID-19/Sider/default.aspx>. According to Government estimates, culling the country's mink herd could cost up to five billion kroner (nearly \$800 million).<sup>9</sup>

**Danish Exports of HS Codes 430110/430211: Mink Fur skins, Raw, Whole, With or Without Head, Tail or Paws & Mink Fur skins, Whole, With or Without Head, Tail or Paws, Tanned or Dressed, Not Assembled**

Partner	Calendar Year Value (USD)				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>World</b>	<b>1,604,968,839</b>	<b>907,660,304</b>	<b>1,098,202,888</b>	<b>920,157,418</b>	<b>726,236,737</b>
Cambodia	21,909,896	106,918,877	184,189,465	213,126,467	208,160,480
Thailand	0	37,693,929	93,067,113	146,524,592	204,203,328
China	450,344,750	445,680,644	353,109,259	205,505,058	110,992,885
Hong Kong	886,619,675	133,823,560	240,367,122	124,765,917	47,821,218
Vietnam	120,455,778	82,172,223	88,989,998	83,328,346	47,599,612
Malaysia	7,183,472	5,233,372	20,998,110	28,553,944	32,651,055
South Korea	31,814,036	24,682,877	30,210,956	35,223,107	14,983,638
Poland	11,145,748	20,493,380	6,878,211	10,896,629	14,386,027
Greece	11,383,324	4,768,834	29,786,759	25,153,321	12,062,798
Finland	20,983,454	12,383,412	13,852,505	12,316,573	10,037,794
Russia	1,835,463	1,230,858	5,145,156	8,712,013	6,775,185
Italy	18,163,531	13,155,088	15,820,060	9,466,910	4,405,116
Bulgaria	1,707	189	0	6,244,509	3,461,211
Turkey	78,667	628,223	2,635,948	297,545	3,236,833
Lithuania	2,080,158	2,635,117	2,176,650	3,363,623	3,001,528
Ukraine	842,249	491,433	1,507,062	1,086,184	470,655
Germany	12,138,198	6,299,599	5,665,792	1,818,384	433,549
France	238,927	74,376	95,511	405,815	307,529
Estonia	684,379	234,553	226,503	323,618	236,765
Kyrgyzstan	0	0	0	682,322	221,991
United States	141,804	284,112	142,803	89,093	218,178
Latvia	95,157	14,369	0	5,485	165,669
All Others	6,828,466	8,761,279	3,337,905	2,267,963	403,693

Source Trade Data Monitor

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.

<sup>8</sup> <https://en.mfvm.dk/news/news/nyhed/covid-19-all-mink-in-denmark-must-be-culled/>

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., <https://apnews.com/article/denmark-cull-15-million-minks-covid-19-37f57a303bbf738efca50918c35696de>