

Thousands of farmed American Mink dead of Covid-19

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On 9 October 2020, CNN reported the death of thousands of American Mink *Neovison vison* of Covid-19 at fur farms in the U.S. states of Utah and Wisconsin (Rossburg & Ries 2020). According to the report, the virus was first observed in August, soon after farmworkers fell ill with the disease. Investigations revealed that the virus had been transmitted from humans to animals.

The illness manifests itself in American Mink with breathing difficulties and crusting around the eyes. Animals showing symptoms succumb rapidly and are usually dead by the following day. At least 8000 Mink have died of Covid-19 on nine fur farms in Utah. Two thousand Mink have died of Covid-19 on farms in Wisconsin (Rossburg & Ries 2020).

According to Reuters, Covid-19 outbreaks at dozens of fur farms in Denmark, the world's largest American Mink producer, have prompted the proposed culling of about one million animals (Barsoe 2020). There have been similar outbreaks among farmed American Mink in the Netherlands and Spain (Rossburg & Ries 2020).

SAR-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, has been detected in other carnivore species, including domestic dog and cat, Lion *Panthera leo* and Tiger *Panthera tigris* (Daly 2020). The animals in these cases are understood to have been infected by humans.

The zoonotic 2003 SARS outbreak is believed to have begun when bats and Common Palm Civets *Paradoxurus hermaphroditus* (also known as Asian Palm Civets and often referred to generically in the news media as “civets” or “civet cats”) transmitted the virus to people (Gill 2020, Jarvis 2020, Wan *et al.* 2020). Although the Common Palm Civet was being looked at as a potential intermediary host species for SAR-CoV-2, further research indicates that several differences in the Common Palm Civet's ACE2 receptor make it less able to bind SARS-CoV-2, rendering this species a less than optimal intermediary (Jarvis 2020, Wan *et al.* 2020).

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