

Initial investigation results: infections at three more mink farms

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Mink infected with coronavirus have been identified at three more farms. A suspected outbreak at a fourth farm is currently being investigated. Health minister Hugo de Jonge and agriculture minister Carola Schouten have reported these findings, based on the results of mandatory screening currently being conducted for all mink farms in the Netherlands, in a letter to the House of Representatives.

The Outbreak Management Team for Zoonoses (OMT-Z) has been asked to consider these new findings in formulating an advisory report on the risk that SARS-CoV-2 will continue to circulate on infected mink farms and thus, in time, become a permanent source of infection or reinfection for humans and animals. Ministers De Jonge and Schouten will use the advisory report to decide on Wednesday whether additional measures are needed.

Various options are currently being worked out in detail in anticipation of the OMT-Z's report. All conceivable measures will be considered, including the possibility of culling all mink animals at infected farms. Public health is always the main consideration.

Since 26 April 2020, infected animals have been found at a total of six mink farms, with eight locations, situated in the municipalities of Gemert-Bakel, Laarbeek, Deurne and St Anthonis. The suspected outbreak is on a farm in Venray. Measures were introduced at COVID-19-infected mink farms as soon as the first cases were confirmed at the end of April. These measures were later extended to all mink farms in the Netherlands. According to the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), the risk of the virus being transmitted from mink to human outside mink sheds remains negligible. The findings of the recent investigation have not changed this assessment.