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Hugo de Jonge
Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport
Parnassusplein 5
2511 VX
The Hague

Cc Carola Schouten, Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

Reference: Covid-19, public and animal health concerns, debate 16 June 2020

Kopenhagen, 15 June 2020

Dear Minister De Jonge,

I write to you on behalf of the Fur Free Alliance, a coalition of more than fifty animal protection organisations who are campaigning for an end to the exploitation of animals farmed and trapped for their fur, to ask you to support the closure of all mink farms in the Netherlands at the earliest possible opportunity.

Our members have followed the news about Covid-19 infections on Dutch mink fur factory farms with increasing alarm. It is deeply distressing to learn that more than 570.000 mink from the 13 infected farms have been gassed to death in the last week.

We understand the decision to kill the mink on the infected farms and put in place additional measures on the other mink farms, confirmed in your and Minister Schouten's letter to the Dutch Parliament on 3 June 2020¹, was taken on the grounds of both animal and public health, following the advice you received from a team of veterinary and infectious disease experts who had assessed the public health risk of a mink farm infected with COVID-19.

According to that letter, the OMT-Z (Outbreak Management Team Zoonoses) "indicates that there is a risk that SARS-CoV-2 will continue to circulate on mink farms for a long time"; that "new infections were found in the early warning study, and more infections are expected to be detected in the coming weeks"; and "there are various uncertain factors that may play a role, such as the chance of mutations in the virus." The OMT-Z was also quoted as saying "When the human epidemic and the

¹ Minister de Jonge and Minister Schouten, letter to the House of Representatives, 3 June 2020
<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/06/03/kamerbrief-over-aanvullende-maatregelen-voor-nertsenbedrijven>



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risk of human-human infections is decreasing, a mink-human infection can increase the incidence of SARS-CoV-2 in humans. We want to prevent that."

We therefore respectfully urge you, for the sake of both animal and human health, to close down all remaining mink farms in the Netherlands at the earliest possible opportunity. Further, we ask that the farms where mink have been culled and farmers compensated are not allowed to re-stock their farms with new mink and continue their fur farming business operations.

Given the sustained increase in farms found to be infected with Covid19, it would be against the precautionary approach, and unethical, to allow farms to be repopulated, putting thousands more animals at risk of being culled. Government approval for farms to maintain operations also carries with it a risk that public funds will be repeatedly wasted compensating farmers after multiple 'clearances', in the plausible event that infections reoccur. It is simply not appropriate to take unnecessary risk with animal and human health in allowing these farms to continue to function any longer, nor is this an industry that should receive public funds in ways that facilitate its continued existence.

The Netherlands rightly banned the farming of mink in 2013, we applaud you for that. The tragedy now playing out in your country is an opportunity for the Dutch government to act urgently in view of the serious public health and animal welfare problems associated with fur farms, to bring forward the phase-out deadline, and close all mink farming operations down without delay.

Yours sincerely,

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Fur Free Alliance



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The Fur Free Alliance is an international coalition of over 50 animal protection organisations representing millions of supporters worldwide.





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Veganstvo





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- Anima Mundi
- Animal Friends Croatia
- Animal Rights Center Japan
- Animalia
- Animals Friend Fund Latvia
- Associação ANIMAL
- Association for the Protection of Fur Bearing Animals
- Beauty without Cruelty
- Bont voor Dieren
- Born Free USA
- Campaigns and Activism for the Animals in Industry
- CARE
- Change for Animals Foundation
- Deutscher Tierschutzbund
- Djurens Rätt
- Dyrenes Alliance
- Dzīvnieku Brīvība
- Ecoetica
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- Humane Society International
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- Hungarian Anti-Fur League
- JAVA
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- NOAH
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- One Voice
- Open Cages Belarus
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- Open Cages Ukraine
- Respect for Animals
- RSPCA
- Sloboda za Životinje
- Svoboda zvířat
- Swiss Animal Protection
- The Humane Society of the United States
- Tu Abrigo Su Vida
- UAnimals
- Unique Planet
- VEGAIA
- Vegan Initiative
- Vier Pfoten
- Vita Animal Rights Centre
- Viva!
- World Animal Net