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Update 6 on the COVID-19 situation in mink in Denmark

Dear Dr. Monique Eliot,

I hope this letter finds you well.

Following my letter to you on 16 October 2020, I hereby update you on the developments regarding SARS-CoV-2 in mink farms in Denmark.

Since June 2020, Denmark has experienced an extensive spread of SARS-CoV2 outbreaks on mink farms. We have also seen virus transmission between mink and humans. As of 4 November 2020 a total of 207 farms are infected.

The Danish government is taking the spread of SARS-CoV2 on mink farms extremely seriously and has taken a number of concrete steps to mitigate the risk posed by the infected mink farms. Without delay, the relevant authorities initiated the culling of all infected mink farms and non-infected mink farms in a zone around these.

On 4 November 2020 the Danish government announced that new, unique mutations in the SARS-CoV-2 variants had been found in mink populations and in the humans living in the surrounding areas. New findings conducted by the Danish health authorities show, that some of these mutations have a reduced response to antibodies, which can ultimately affect the efficacy of potential vaccines. Currently, further investigations on this matter are being conducted.

On 4 November 2020, after the new, unique mutations were found, the Danish government announced that all remaining Danish mink will be culled, including breeding animals. The government has further taken steps to intensify the efforts (i.e. more personnel etc.) to conclude the operation as swiftly as possible.

This operation will affect about 12 million mink from still active mink farms. The current efforts to cull minks will be intensified to speed up the pace. An emergency plan will be prepared by the National Crisis Coordination Committee to support the culling efforts. Under the auspices of the Danish National Police, the authorities of the Danish Ministry of Defence will support the planning and execution of an emergency plan and, to this end, staff and equipment from the authorities of the Ministry of Defence will be geared up to support the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration and the police in the effort to cull the entire population of mink in Denmark as soon as possible.

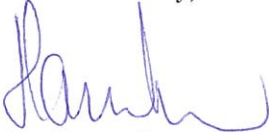
The Danish Health authorities have informed the ECDC, the WHO and the European Commission of the findings. The Danish authorities will provide full transparency and ensure that relevant international partners are kept updated in accordance with relevant, international health protocols.

A general ban will not be imposed on future mink farming in Denmark, but no minks will be allowed in the cages in 2021. The Government is aware that the actions now taken will entail a de facto shutdown of the Danish mink industry – at least for a number of years – but, according to the Danish health authorities, even a small number of breeding animals will pose a risk to public health.

In my update from 16 October 2020, you were informed about the decision to start culling mink on all infected farms as well as mink on farms within a radius of 7.8 kilometres from an infected farm. This has resulted in the culling of ca. 1.4 million mink to date. The DFVA will continue its epidemiological investigations in order to clarify the transmission routes.

I will keep you posted about any further developments concerning this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me if any need for clarification.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Hanne Larsen
Chief Veterinary Officer, DVFA

This information is transmitted in the context of Article 1.1.6 in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code in order to provide the relevant information arising from field observations to enable the OIE to have more clarity on which animal species are susceptible to infection and may potentially be involved in the epidemiology of the human disease through.