



**OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**



Tests at an Oregon mink farm show SARS-CoV-2 still present with no virus mutations; testing, surveillance, and trapping continues

NEWS RELEASE

JANUARY 13TH, 2021

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) will continue to test, survey, and trap at an affected Oregon mink farm after the third round of samples found SARS-CoV-2 still circulating among the herd. On January 11, the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) confirmed two out of 62 mink samples collected by ODA on January 5, tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. The second round of testing that occurred last month on December 21, 2020 showed no sign of the virus among the 62 samples collected.

“These are new infections, not reinfections,” said Dr. Ryan Scholz, ODA state veterinarian. “Genome testing also confirms that all the infected mink have the same strain of SARS-CoV-2 with no mutations. This is positive news because it is very likely the new infections occurred during regular operations which includes moving the animals and some consolidation. We will continue to follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and test until we get two consecutive negative testing rounds before releasing the quarantine. Biologists are doing an outstanding job of trapping wildlife near the farm, ensuring the virus does not affect nor establish itself in other wildlife.”

Since December, wildlife biologists with USDA Wildlife Services, under the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) direction, have captured and tested more than a dozen animals, including ten opossums, three cats, two skunks, and three mink. All the animals tested negative except for two mink. On December 22, NVSL confirmed a mink (captured December 13) trapped near the farm tested positive for low levels of SARS-CoV-2. Biologists caught two additional escaped mink within 75 yards of the affected farm between December 23 and 24. On January 11, NVSL confirmed one of the captured minks tested positive for low levels of SARS-CoV-2. Biologists have not caught any additional mink to date.

Based on the location of capture, condition of the mink, and necropsy findings, USDA Wildlife Services and ODFW believe all three captured mink had very recently escaped confinement at the affected farm. In this case, the affected facility is small, and therefore disclosing any individually identifiable information could reasonably result in disclosure of an individual’s medical information, precisely an individual’s COVID-19 status. ODA believes that the COVID status of an identified person is considered personal information that should not be disclosed to the public and would be an unreasonable invasion of privacy under ORS 192.355(2). Therefore, ODA is declining to release this information. According to the USDA, controlling the virus in people is ultimately the best way to mitigate the virus from spreading to animals.

<https://odanews.wpengine.com/tests-at-an-oregon-mink-farm-show-sars-cov-2-still-present-with-no-virus-mutations-testing-surveillance-and-trapping-continues/>