

# People Working on Mink Farms: Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

**SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, can spread between people and animals, including mink. Mink are very easily infected with SARS-CoV-2.**

Anyone on the farm can spread SARS-CoV-2 to other workers and animals. Take precautions to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 among people and animals on mink farms.

- When interacting with healthy mink or other animals:
  - » Wear a face mask or fit-tested N-95 if available, eye protection, dedicated outerwear, and gloves, and
  - » Minimize the amount of time spent in close contact with mink and other workers.
- If you are sick, exposed to COVID-19, or have been diagnosed with COVID-19, do not work with mink to prevent spreading the virus to the animals.

## Protect mink from SARS-CoV-2

- Stay home if sick.
- Screen workers and visitors for COVID-19. Ask about symptoms and take temperatures at the beginning of each shift or when people arrive at the farm.
- Separate workers who arrive at work sick or become sick during the workday from other people and animals, and send them home.
- Require masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) when interacting with all animals, even if workers don't feel sick. Wearing a mask does **NOT** replace the need to practice social distancing.
- Encourage proper hand hygiene, such as hand washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, then dry thoroughly with a paper towel, or the use of hand sanitizer when soap is not available. Wash hands after handling animals, animal feed, and animal waste.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces regularly. Pay close attention to areas where animal feed is prepared and stored. Disinfect feeding equipment as often as possible. Do not reuse leftover feed.
- Limit access to farm and farm buildings to essential personnel. Do not allow cats, dogs, wildlife, and birds in farm buildings.
- Discourage the sharing of equipment, tools, or supplies to reduce spread of SARS-CoV-2 from farms to other locations.
- Use extreme caution when introducing new mink to the herd to avoid introducing SARS-CoV-2 to the farm. New mink should be tested for SARS-CoV-2 and separated for at least 21 days before joining the main herd.
- People working on mink farms should be alert for signs of disease in mink and should alert a supervisor if they suspect illness in mink. If there is suspicion of SARS-CoV-2 in mink, call your State Animal Health Official or USDA Animal and Plant Inspection Service Veterinary Services office. Signs of illness in mink may include:
  - » Poor appetite
  - » Sneezing
  - » Coughing
  - » Nose discharge
  - » Eye discharge
  - » Gasping for air or shortness of breath
  - » Diarrhea
  - » Lack of energy
  - » Increase in mink deaths



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

## Protect yourself around sick mink

- **Minimize contact with sick or dead animals.** If animals appear to be sick, wear gloves, face mask, and goggles or face shield when working with or near the animals.
  - » Reduce the number of people interacting with any animal that is suspected to have or tests positive for SARS-CoV-2. Staff who have contact with these animals should wear respiratory protection (N95 or higher) instead of a facemask. Staff at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should not work with these animals.
- **Practice good hand hygiene.** Always immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after:
  - » Direct contact with animals, their food, supplies, or waste/feces.
  - » Cleaning up after animals, including any body fluids or waste.
  - » After handling animal carcasses or pelts.
  - » After using equipment for pelting and processing.
  - » Leaving areas where animals are housed, even if you did not touch an animal.
  - » Removing PPE and masks.
- **Use a mask and eye protection** (e.g. goggles or face shield) when splashes or sprays are likely to occur.
- **Avoid activities that might aerosolize (spray into the air) infectious material** such as using compressed air and/or water under pressure for cleaning.
  - » If participating in aerosol-generating procedures (e.g., cleaning, whelping, pelting, rendering), wear respiratory protection that is at least as protective as a fit-tested NIOSH-certified disposable N95 filtering face piece respirator, a face shield or goggles, gloves, protective outerwear.
  - » If an N95 respirator is not available, use a combination of a surgical mask and a face shield that covers the entire front (that extends to the chin or below) and sides of the face.
- **Use PPE** when cleaning or disinfecting an area potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2. Follow the cleaning or disinfectant product manufacturer's instructions for use. Follow recommendations for safe practices for how to put on and take off PPE.
- **If there is accidental direct contact with a sick animal or its urine, feces, blood, saliva, or vomit on exposed skin,** workers should immediately wash the exposed area with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds and notify a supervisor. If exposure occurs to eyes, inside of nose, or mouth, flush the area with only water.
- **If a farm worker receives a bite, scratch or, abrasion** from an animal, animal product, or an object contaminated by an animal, wash the exposed area of skin immediately with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, immediately alert a supervisor, and contact a health-care provider.
- **If someone is exposed to sick animals or a sick person,** they should self-monitor for temperature or symptoms for a period of 14 days after the incident and not interact with mink during this period.

### For more information:

Interim SARS-CoV-2 Guidance and Recommendations for Farmed Mink and Other Mustelids ([https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/sars-cov-2-mink-guidance.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/sars-cov-2-mink-guidance.pdf))

Interim Guidance for Animal Health and Public Health Officials Managing Farmed Mink and Other Farmed Mustelids with SARS-CoV-2 ([https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/one\\_health/downloads/sars-cov-2-guidance-for-farmed-mink.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/one_health/downloads/sars-cov-2-guidance-for-farmed-mink.pdf))

CDC COVID-19 and Animals (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>)