



OREGON TITAN FUSION CENTER

Oregon Department of Justice, Criminal Division

(FOUO) Oregon Mink Farms Surveilled by Activist Group Following COVID-19 Outbreak

8 December 2020 | 048-20

(U//FOUO) Scope

(U//FOUO) The Oregon TITAN Fusion Center is distributing this situational awareness bulletin following self-disclosed information from an animal activist group that was actively surveilling all Oregon mink farms following a public notice from Oregon Department of Agriculture documenting a COVID-19 outbreak at one mink farm.

(U//FOUO) Details

(U//FOUO) Direct Action Everywhere (DxE), a global grassroots network of animal rights activists,¹ issued a press release on 8 December 2020 identifying the site of Oregon's recent COVID-19 mink farm outbreak. The press release stated that "DxE investigators used drones and hidden cameras to surveill (sic) the state's 11 licensed mink farms, and confirmed Western Star Fur Farm in Astoria as the outbreak site when a state veterinarian arrived on site for follow-up testing." DxE claims Oregon has handled the outbreak with a lack of transparency which in turn poses "a risk to public health" claiming a "bidirectional transmission potential of COVID-19 between humans and mink and the real possibility that the virus mutated in mink could circumvent a vaccine."²

Mink Farming in Oregon

- 11 licensed farms
- 438,327 minks
- 4th in the nation for pelt production

(U//FOUO) According to the CDC and the US Department of Agriculture there is currently no evidence that animals, including mink, play a significant role in transmitting the virus to humans and the risk is considered low. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that while mink pose a risk for virus spill-over to humans, further virological studies should be conducted to understand its transmissibility.³

(U//FOUO) The Clatsop County Sheriff's Office received a suspicious activity report related to the Western Star Fur Farm about a vehicle in the vicinity on 7 December 2020 that may have been connected to the surveillance activities.⁴ The OTFC encourages reporting through local law enforcement since groups that continue to advocate for direct action pose a potential threat to mink farmers in Oregon.

(U//FOUO) Mink Farming in Oregon

- Oregon has 11 mink farms (8 in Marion County; 2 in Clatsop County; and 1 in Clackamas County)
- Oregon has an estimated 438,327 mink
- Oregon was ranked 4th in the nation (9% of total) for 2017 mink pelt production

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(U//FOUO) Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) of Animal Activist Groups

(U//FOUO) The DxE website includes a video titled “How to Lead a Frontline Surveillance Team” (i.e., conducting daylight investigations from public property). The video goes on to detail some common techniques used during a surveillance operation, which include but are not limited to:⁵

- Identifying entry and egress points
- Relocating vehicles as necessary
- Establishing a lookout
- Recording all interactions with farmers and law enforcement
- Using unmanned aerial vehicles (or drones)

(U//FOUO) While DxE promotes non-violent, lawful activities on its website and outreach materials, their video provides a good example of the TTPs used by a criminal derivative of animal activism, sometimes referred to as “animal rights extremism.” Oregon mink farmers have previously been the victims of animal rights extremists who may commit crimes such as criminal trespass⁶ and arson⁷ to achieve their goals, which (for mink farms) typically involve the mass release of animals.

(U//FOUO) Removing an animal from a quarantined facility in the state of Oregon is a Class A Violation under Oregon Revised Statute 596.990(2).⁸

(U) OTFC Contact Information

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OTFC SIN(S): AC 2.1

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¹ <https://www.directactioneverywhere.com/about-us>

² Direct Action Everywhere Press Release issued 12/08/2020

³ <https://www.who.int/csr/don/06-november-2020-mink-associated-sars-cov2-denmark/en/>

⁴ Clatsop County Sheriff’s Office; 12/08/20

⁵ Open Source <https://www.directactioneverywhere.com/resources>

⁶ Open Source Daily Astorian; *Animal activist raids Astoria-area mink farm, releases animals*; 10/19/2008

⁷ Oregonlive; *Authorities investigate arson at former mink farm in Clatsop County*; 01/10/2019

⁸ Oregon Revised Statutes

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