



PROTOCOLS FOR THE TRAINING OF STOCK PEOPLE FOR MINK HANDLING AND HUSBANDRY

Objectives of this protocol should include:

- Stock people should be properly trained to complete the tasks they are responsible for on the farm. Not all farm employees need to be trained for all farm tasks.
- Employees that work with the mink, stock people, should be trained in the humane care of mink.
- Farmers should maintain documentation relating to the training of stock people. This should include a written confirmation of training signed by both the employee (s) and employer.

Training may include verbal explanation, videos, demonstrations, images, etc.

All new stock people should be trained to properly catch and handle mink in accordance with the Standard Guidelines.

Stock people should handle the mink in a manner that minimizes stress; the catching and handling of different age group need to be specifically addressed. Stock people are required to handle the mink of all ages with respect, staying calm even when the mink are not cooperating.

Kits: this is the most diverse group do to their rapid growth.

1. **Pre-Separation Kits:** as minimal handling as possibly, while trying not to disturb the female. Individual kits or whole litters can be picked up by hand for individual evaluation by supporting the entire animal; the female may be encouraged to leave the nest and blocked out into the pen while the kits are being examined or the female may be moved slightly off the nest and a pencil or similar device used to manipulate the kits in the nest for evaluation. Reasons for handling the newborn kits; counting kits, looking for tangled kits, evaluating health, farming extra or smaller kits to another litter of like age or size, addressing nest and/or bedding issues, poor mothering, cage repair and whelping problems.
2. **Post separation kits:** Can be caught by grasping the entire body, by a single rear leg or by the base of the tail when appropriate. The body can then be supported by the other hand or rested on the cage or nest box for evaluation, vaccination or treatment.
3. **Juveniles:** can be caught in a calm and controlled manner by grasping the chest area or base of the tail. The mink can then be removed from the cage and rested on the top of the cage and grasp by the back of the neck to stabilize the mink for evaluation. The mink can be carried by controlling the base of the tail for short distances, while supporting the body of the mink when movement is further. If automated restraint equipment is utilized, the operator should follow manufacturer's instructions. When appropriate a transport cage



should be utilized when moving mink between sheds. Reasons for handling juveniles include; examination/treatment, vaccinating, separating, weighing and measuring, grading and euthanasia.

- Avoid pressure on the abdomen when handling mink, especially with pregnant females
- Nets should be available for catching any mink that are loose in the sheds
- Check box/cage traps used to catch loose mink on a daily basis, traps should be placed in shaded areas

Stock people should be trained to look after the mink's basic needs.

- Feed the mink according to farm manager's direction, which is related to the season and minks' physiological needs
- Check the watering system daily to ensure adequate water is available and that system is functioning correctly
- Bed the mink (type, amount) according to season and managers directions
- Identify signs of illness/injury/pain to determine when a mink requires medical attention and act accordingly.

Stock people should be trained to care for mink during the different seasons:

How to care for mink during the breeding and gestation season:

- Carefully observe mating pairs and promptly separate if overly aggressive behavior occurs.
- Proper care should be used in separating mating pairs if needed.
- Increasing the feed allowance may temper over-aggressive behavior.
- Mink should be monitored for injuries associated with breeding behavior and then treated and recorded.
- If artificial lighting is being utilized; the lighting time frame needs to be regularly evaluated for correct function.
- The management of bred females should stress minimal disturbances from the end of breeding through implantation.
- Any undesirable behaviors seen in the breeders should be recorded and the animal evaluated for breeding soundness and future use as a breeder.
- Monitor body condition and adjust feed accordingly.



How to care for mink during the whelping/lactation season:

- Maintain nest boxes so they have adequate amounts of suitable bedding material and that they are clean and dry.
- Provide false bottoms/floors prior to whelping and remove as soon as kits are large enough.
- Monitor females and litters for health and welfare concerns and address appropriately.
- Follow farm procedure for kit fostering when needed.
- Warm chilled kits with an external heat source, where appropriate.
- Make water and feed accessible to the kits, as appropriate, for their stage of development.
- The use of kit hospitals should be developed for care of poor-doing kits.

How to care for mink during the weaning and separating period:

- Wean and separate kits according to farm plan.
- Monitor females and kits for health and welfare issues and address appropriately.
- Pen shocking densities must be considered when weaning the female.

How to care for mink during the growing period:

- Monitor mink for body condition, health and address appropriately.
- Pen stocking density must be maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Standard Guidelines.
- Feed appropriately to promote growth and minimize aggression with pen mates.
- Vaccinate mink according to farm plan.

How to care for mink during the conditioning period:

- Manage the mink's body condition through the conditioning process.
- Plan and adjust feeding levels in regards to weather and body conditions.
- Manage the mink's body condition and feeding protocol in preparation for breeding
- Review preparedness of Extreme Cold Weather protocol and Back-Up Water plan.