

<https://www.koin.com/news/health/coronavirus/3-mink-caught-outside-quarantined-farm-2-test-sars-cov-2-positive/>

3 mink caught outside quarantined farm; 2 test SARS-CoV-2 positive

No mutations detected among the infected mink, officials said

by: [Danny Peterson](#)

Posted: Jan 13, 2021 / 10:58 AM PST / Updated: Jan 13, 2021 / 11:13 AM PST

PORTLAND, Ore. (KOIN) — The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) announced Tuesday that a third round of tests found SARS-CoV-2 is still circulating among a mink farm herd in Oregon that had been under quarantine due to the outbreak of the virus.

On Monday, the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) confirmed two out of 62 mink samples collected by ODA on Jan. 5 tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. The second round of testing, conducted on Dec. 21, had zero positive tests during among the 62 samples.

The two SARS-CoV-2-positive mink are among three mink that had been captured outside the quarantined farm since last month and believed to have escaped their confinement at the facility, officials said.

ODA said there were no signs any of the tested mink had mutations of the virus.

“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.”

He went on to say the lack of mutations is positive news because it means the new infections very likely occurred during regular operations, including 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,” Scholz said. “Biologists are doing an outstanding job of trapping wildlife near the farm, ensuring the virus does not affect nor establish itself in other wildlife.”

More than a dozen animals—including ten opossums, three cats, two skunks and three mink—have been captured and tested by wildlife biologists with the Oregon USDA Wildlife Service (ODFW), under the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s direction, since last month. All the animals tested negative except for two minks, officials said.

On Dec. 22, NVSL confirmed a mink, captured Dec. 13, trapped near the farm tested positive for low levels of SARS-CoV-2. Two additional escaped mink were caught by biologists within 75 yards of the affected farm between Dec. 23 and 24. On Monday, NSVL confirmed one of the newly captured mink tested positive for low levels of SARS-CoV-2. No additional mink have been caught by biologists since then.

USDA Wildlife Services and ODFW said they believe all three of the mink captured outside the quarantined farm since last month recently escaped confinement at the facility based on the location of capture, condition of the mink and necropsy findings.

The Center for Biological Diversity's Environmental Health Program Director and Senior Attorney Lori Ann Burd said the recent positive tests for the virus in mink at the farm should prompt regulators to shut it down.

"Given that COVID-19 continues to spread within this quarantined mink factory farm, and that mink continue to escape from it into the wild, it's clear that this facility poses too great of a threat to wildlife and public health to continue operating," Burd said. "With two of three escaped mink found in the wild testing positive for COVID-19, regulators must take immediate action to shut down this facility."

In late November, [officials confirmed](#) the first cases of the virus in mink at a fur farm in Oregon, after which the farm was immediately placed under quarantine, meaning no animal or animal product can leave the farm until further notice.

Authorities have not identified the location of the farm, which is [one of only seven active mink farms in Oregon](#). It being a small facility, disclosing any individually identifiable information could reasonably result in disclosure to an individual's medical information, such as their COVID-19 status, which ODA said they consider personal information that should not be made public.

The mink are believed to have contracted the virus from humans, officials said. Despite worries that from reports of oversees of virus-contracted mink propagating a mutation of SARS-CoV-2. U.S. authorities have [said](#) the risk of the virus jumping from mink to humans is low and almost negligible when properly managed.

In Utah, a wild mink living in the area of an infected farm was identified as [testing positive](#) for SARS-CoV-2 last month, officials said.

Denmark plans to [kill all of its roughly 17 million mink](#) over worries over a mutated form of coronavirus that can spread to humans that was found on mink farms.

Two recent variants of the coronavirus that have erupted in Britain and South Africa have raised alarms globally as they appear to spread more easily. The U.S. has also detected the strain from Britain. However recent research [suggests](#) Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine can protect against those mutations.

