

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

Stichting PETA Nederland

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Carola Schouten
Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
Postbus 20401
2500 EK Den Haag
The Netherlands

29 April 2020

Dear Ms Schouten,

I'm writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) – an affiliate of PETA US, the largest animal rights organisation in the world, with over 6.5 million members and supporters – following the news that minks on Dutch fur farms have tested positive for COVID-19. We urge you to bring forward the deadline by which mink farms must be phased out in the Netherlands.

As with the SARS virus, scientists have concluded that the novel coronavirus first infected humans through close contact with captive wildlife at a live-animal meat market. And when it comes to the public health risk they pose, live-animal meat markets are really no different from the facilities in which minks are caged and farmed for their fur. As there's a very real risk that new zoonotic diseases could be transmitted to humans when animals are confined in intensive conditions, responsible governments must take all necessary steps to minimise the risk that the next pandemic will originate in their country.

Scientists have long regarded diseases from wildlife reservoirs caused by various bacteria, viruses, and parasites as a major public health concern, and now, [conservation experts warn](#) that the skins trade is fuelling the risk of further epidemics. As in the case of live-animal meat markets, on fur farms, minks and other animals killed for their skin are confined to cramped wire cages adjacent to one another, making it very easy for infectious diseases to spread through the exchange of urine, excrement, pus, and blood. Animals with infections, sores, and festering, open wounds caused by the wire flooring they must stand on are a common sight. It comes as no surprise, then, that hunters, butchers, farmers, and fur handlers are among those who most commonly suffer from the zoonotic bacterial disease tularaemia.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns, "Approximately 75 percent of recently emerging infectious diseases affecting people began as diseases in animals." Most worryingly, many viruses harboured by animals that could potentially harm humans are as yet unidentified or mutate after emerging.

Zusterorganisaties:

- PETA Amerika
- PETA Foundation (Engeland)
- PETA Azië-Oceanië
- PETA India
- PETA Duitsland
- PETA Australië

Algemeen Nut
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The immediate closure of the Netherlands' last remaining mink farms would benefit animals as well as humans. Minks are intelligent, highly social animals who retain their wild and inquisitive instincts despite generations of captive breeding. This makes being confined to cramped, barren cages for their entire lives all the more traumatising for them. Unable to engage in natural behaviour, these sensitive animals often go mad from the confinement, and some even self-cannibalise, chewing into their own limbs or tails as a result of the constant psychological and physical torment.

Allowing mink farms to maintain business as usual for nearly four more years – in the face of a global crisis stemming from animal exploitation – would be inexcusable from the perspective of both the risk posed to humans and the harm inflicted on the minks themselves. Now is the moment for decisive action.

Respectfully,



Mimi Bekhechi
Campaigns Adviser

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