

Russian Mink Farmers Unfazed by Coronavirus Mutations

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Russia has no plans to cull its mink. **Mads Claus Rasmussen / EPA / TASS**

Producers of mink fur in Russia said Friday they have not encountered outbreaks of the coronavirus on their farms and do not have plans to cull their stocks amid growing concerns in Europe that the virus could spread and mutate in mink-to-human transmission.

“We have no intention of killing our mink because of Covid-19. Our animals and staff working on the farms have been completely healthy and we haven’t seen anything unusual,” a representative of Russia’s largest mink farm, Kaliningrad-based Bagrationovskoye, told The Moscow Times.

Denmark on Wednesday [announced](#) that it would cull its entire mink population — as many as 17 million — after a mutated form of the coronavirus that can spread to humans was found on mink farms. Danish researchers said they found that the animals can harbor new mutations of the virus that could undermine the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccines that are currently being developed worldwide. At least 12 Danes have so far been [diagnosed](#) with mink-related coronavirus.

Two other large mink farms in Russia also said they had not diagnosed any cases of the coronavirus and were not aware of any mink-related coronavirus cases in Russia.

Related article: [Russia Breaks Daily Coronavirus Record With 20K New Infections](#)

Minks' susceptibility to the coronavirus came first to light in April when the Netherlands [reported outbreaks](#) on mink farms. Infected humans who work there can transmit the virus to captive mink, which are kept in close quarters ideal for rapid transmission from mink to mink, where [scientists](#) say the virus can mutate. The altered virus is believed to then be transmitted from mink to human.

Spain and the Netherlands have also [announced](#) the culling of portions of their mink populations.

Sergei Stolbov, president of the Russian Fur Union told The Moscow Times that no plans have been made to "eliminate the entire stock of mink in the country," calling the connection between mink and the coronavirus "understudied and far fetched."

Stolbov criticized decisions by European countries to cull mink, blaming "politicians and various animal rights groups" for using the coronavirus to crackdown on mink farms.

"To please them, the world's best gene pool of mink will now be destroyed."

Russia has a long history of mink production. In the 1980s, the country accounted for up to 40% of global production. The country now [slaughters](#) around 1.2 million mink annually, and its global share has fallen to 3% of the world's total.

In conversations with The Moscow Times, mink producers complained that their business has been plummeting as China, the biggest importer of Russian mink, has temporarily banned the import of fur from abroad.

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