

Dutch to cull thousands of mink after farm infections

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Dutch health officials have ordered the slaughter of around 10,000 mink to start Friday on farms where coronavirus outbreaks have been reported, possibly infecting at least two employees.

The cleanup of the [mink](#) farms in southern Netherlands, the epicentre of the country's outbreak, is aimed at preventing further contamination, two senior Dutch ministers said.

Health officials warned the "virus can continue to circulate on mink farms for a long time and therefore posed a risk to public and [animal health](#)," the ministers said in a letter to parliament.

Around 10,000 mink are to be culled in the clean-up on the fur farms, agriculture department spokeswoman Elise van den Bosch said.

The estimate did not take into account mink pups born in spring, with [female animals](#) giving birth to about four to six offspring, she told AFP Thursday.

The ministers described it as a "difficult measure" adding that farmers would be financially compensated.

An animal welfare committee would ensure that the animals would be culled in a "responsible way", the ministers said.

Dutch authorities reported two possible cases in May where humans were believed to be infected with coronavirus by mink.

The infections in the south of the Netherlands could be the "first known cases of animal-to-human transmission", the World Health Organization said late last month.

The Dutch government has since banned the transportation of mink and made COVID-19 testing mandatory on all farms across the country.

There have been more than 5,990 coronavirus deaths and almost 46,000 infections in the Netherlands, according to the latest official figures.

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