

Ireland plans mink cull over mutated virus fears

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Ireland is planning a nationwide cull of mink over fears they may carry a mutated version of the coronavirus detected in the animals in Denmark, a government spokesman said Thursday.

An agriculture ministry spokesman said that testing of Ireland's mink herd has yielded no positive COVID-19 tests to date.

But the Republic's department of health "indicated that the continued farming of mink represents an ongoing risk of additional mink-adapted (coronavirus) variants emerging," he said in a statement.

"Therefore, it has recommended that farmed mink in Ireland should be culled to minimise or eliminate this risk."

There are three mink farms housing around 120,000 animals across Ireland.

The agriculture department said it "continues to engage with the mink farmers to consider the next steps".

"This decision will close down three safe, compliant and reputable farms on no scientific basis," said Mette Lykke Nielsen, chief executive of Fur Europe, an industry group representing the farms.

"The proposed ban looks like a copycat version of the other European bans on fur farming."

Earlier this month Denmark—the world's largest producer of mink fur—announced a nationwide cull of 15 million to 17 million animals after a mutated version of the coronavirus was detected in farms and spread to humans.

On Thursday the nation's health ministry said the mutation, which raised concerns over the effectiveness of any future vaccine, has likely been eradicated.

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