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Thank you for your email expressing concern for mink farms and COVID-19 in B.C.

Many of the issues raised in recent letters to me in this regard are active matters within the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, as well as the Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. I acknowledge the concerns brought forward regarding mink farming. I have met with industry and stakeholders on this topic, including the BCSPCA, the Fur-Bearers and the Humane Society of Canada / International.

The *Animal Health Act's* Fur Farm Regulation establishes the requirements for mink farming. Mink farmers are also eligible for AgriStability. The AgriStability program is a business risk management tool, like insurance, which helps protect net farm income against drops in market prices, production and increases in expenses. AgriStability is available to all agricultural commodity producers, except cannabis, and is not specific to fur farming.

The Fur Farm Regulation requires annual licensing of fur farms, including requirements such as health management plans, general animal health and care, food and water, pens, and structure design. All licensed mink farms were inspected as part of a routine process this past fall, and all premises were found to be in compliance with animal welfare and biosecurity standards.

With respect to urgent concerns regarding COVID-19, please know that Ministry staff, in co-operation with public health, occupational health and wildlife colleagues are working with the Province's licensed fur farms to ensure that all necessary precautions are being taken to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 through human-to-animal or animal-to-human transmission.

Thank you for writing and sharing your concerns with us during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

Lana Popham
Minister