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Fur farm risks continue, despite biosecurity measures

Numerous mink test positive for SARS-CoV-2, including three who escaped cages.

A moratorium on new mink farming in British Columbia was a good first step, but more must be done to protect public health, workers, and wildlife from the pandemic threat created by the fur farming industry, says wildlife protection group The Fur-Bearers.

British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer [last week identified mink farming](#) as a "health hazard which endangers or is likely to endanger public health," as part of an order limiting new mink farms and any increase to populations on mink farms. However, despite assurances from industry and government, 'biosecurity measures' have clearly failed, continuing to put the health of citizens and wildlife at risk.

The World Organisation for Animal Health revealed that eight mink died or were killed because of the virus on a BC mink farm placed under quarantine orders on May 18. The total number of animals who have tested positive for the virus is 13; three of the infected mink had "escaped their cages and were captured on farm."

"We are concerned and growing more unsettled that the government has not taken more action to close the chapter on fur farming in British Columbia," says Michael Howie, spokesperson for The Fur-Bearers. "Between mink carrying the pandemic virus who are able to escape their cages, a [chinchilla farm](#) operating without documents required still getting a permit for years, or the [numerous WorkSafeBC violations](#) found via Freedom of Information requests on the province's fur farms, there's more than enough evidence that fur farming is not compatible with British Columbia in 2021."

In addition to the pandemic and worker safety related issues, fur farms in BC received more than \$6 million in AgriStability payments in the last six years and polling indicates 85 percent of British Columbians oppose killing animals for their fur. There are approximately 11 fur farms in British Columbia, and a [recent government release](#) indicates the mink farms employ 150 people (many of them seasonally). The BC SPCA, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Dr. David Suzuki, and numerous infectious disease specialists have all called on the government to end the industry.

"The moratorium on mink farming does not eliminate the current risks and harms to animals, to workers, and to all British Columbians. The message to the government from the BC public is clear: it's time to end fur farming," says Howie.

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The Fur-Bearers was formed in 1953 in British Columbia to advocate on behalf of fur-bearing animals in the wild and in confinement, as well as promote wildlife coexistence with communities. The Fur-Bearers is a non-partisan, charitable organization. More can be learned at TheFurBearers.com.

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