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For Immediate Release

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Ongoing One Health Response and Investigation on Utah Mink Farms Yields Encouraging Results

Salt Lake City, UT – The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) and the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) continue to work with Federal partners, including the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to respond to confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19 in people) at Utah mink farms. After multiple rounds of testing and ongoing research and investigations, UDAF and UDOH are pleased to report encouraging findings.

In response to the outbreak, UDAF placed quarantines on all the affected farms restricting movement of mink, products and waste on or off affected farms; these quarantines will remain in place until health officials are confident that the virus is no longer circulating on the farms. UDOH and CDC began testing mink and other domestic animals on the farms, including dogs, cats and mice. Sampling also included farm workers and a small number of their household contacts. Initial testing showed positive results in mink, dogs, and feral cats on the farms.

APHIS also established surveillance and testing of free-roaming animals in the area surrounding the farms to assess any potential spillover into wildlife. Animals captured around the farms included wild and feral mink, skunks, raccoons, house mice and deer mice. The only positive specimen from animals considered to be wildlife was a single wild mink. Epidemiologic investigations and subsequent genomic sequencing of the virus strongly suggest that the virus initially entered the farms and was spread to the mink through infected human contact.

Caretakers and officials observed that once the virus was introduced to the farms, it moved quickly through the farmed mink herd. An increase in deaths occurred over an average span of about 1 week. Deaths were predominantly seen in the adult breeding population of the farms with losses approaching 50% of the breeding animals. No mortalities attributable to SARS-CoV-2 were seen in the other species (cats, dogs, wildlife).

On a few of the affected farms, a second and third round of testing was conducted in October and December to monitor the virus and help determine when and if the quarantines on these

farms could be safely lifted. While the results and analysis are still underway for the third round of testing, there is encouraging evidence suggesting that the levels of virus are going down in the mink, cats and dogs living on the farm. Additional community sequencing is needed to fully understand the potential for transmission between people and different animal species in this area; however, at this time, based on extensive epidemiologic investigations, there has been no evidence to date of spread from mink to people in Utah.

All affected farms remain under quarantine. Investigations, including testing, are ongoing for all stages of production on these farms. APHIS has provided guidance for quarantine release that includes serial testing to ensure that infectious virus is cleared from the farms. UDOH and UDAF will continue to work together with Federal partners to provide support and education to affected farmers and promptly respond to any new outbreaks should they occur.

We'd like to thank our One Health partners as well as farm workers for their continued efforts in monitoring, controlling and working to eliminate the spread of this disease on Utah farms.

For additional information visit: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Frequently Asked Questions | CDC](#)



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