

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002727/20
to the Commission
Anja Hazekamp (GUE/NGL)
(5 May 2020)**

Subject: Mink in the fur industry that have been infected with COVID-19, and a ban on the keeping of animals for fur production

In the Netherlands, it has recently been established that mink on various fur farms have been infected with COVID-19 ⁽¹⁾.

Restricted access zones have been created around these farms. Article 61 of the animal health legislation stipulates that farms which are affected may only obtain permission for restocking once enough time has passed to prevent the farms or other locations from becoming reinfected with the disease that has caused the outbreak.

If it is decided to kill the animals, can the Commission confirm that the mink farms concerned should not be restocked until a final solution to the COVID-19 pandemic has been found?

In the Netherlands, all fur farming will be prohibited from 2024. Public opinion in relation to fur farming in Europe is negative ⁽²⁾, and now in addition the fur industry seems to be creating extra risks to the health of human beings and animals.

Does the Commission agree that, in view of the above facts, it would be desirable to introduce a definitive total European ban on the keeping of animals for their fur, and can the Commission give an undertaking that the fur industry will be excluded from EU support measures in connection with the coronavirus pandemic?

**Answer given by Ms Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission
(3 August 2020)**

Based on information made available by the Dutch authorities on 9 June 2020, precautionary measures such as compulsory testing on mink farms, prohibition of movements of minks, protection of workers in mink farms and culling of minks in infected premises are implemented following a risk assessment as regards COVID-19 in minks.

Restocking of culled farms would need the lifting of the mink movement ban and compliance with sanitary requirements. The Dutch government is also exploring the possibility of a one-off, voluntary cessation scheme for mink farmers to terminate their operations in the short term.

A possible EU wide ban of fur animal farming in connection with COVID-19 would not constitute a justified and proportionate measure.

According to the information made available by the Dutch authorities, farmers would be entitled to compensation from the national Animal Health Fund for the culled minks. According to the communication from the Commission 'Temporary Framework for state aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak' ⁽³⁾, it is up to the Member States to grant compensation to companies with the flexibility provided under applicable state aid rules.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.nieuweoogst.nl/nieuws/2020/04/26/nertsen-in-brabant-besmet-met-corona>

⁽²⁾ <https://www.furfreealliance.com/public-opinion/>

⁽³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/what_is_new/covid_19.html