

Instruction of migrant workers at Danish skinning sites

Background

Mink herds with COVID-19 will not be skinned, as selling furs from mink infected with COVID-19 is not allowed, cf Regulation on animal by-products. The same applies to all farms situated in the established zones around a contaminated farm, cf the government's decision from Thursday 1 October 2020 on destruction of contaminated farms and establishment of zones. This means that skinning animals from non-contaminated farms or farms under suspicion is not allowed, if they are situated in a zone.

Danish experiences show that mink workers have an approx. 50 times higher occurrence of COVID-19 than the general public. The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration conducts both regular and risk-based supervision of mink farms in the entire country so that potentially contaminated farms are identified and placed under public supervision, but, at present, approx. 1/8 of Danish farms are contaminated, and new farms are added every day. It can therefore not be ruled out that bodies from mink that have been infected in an early phase of COVID-19, but have not yet shown signs of illness, get to the skinning stage. These mink bodies may constitute a risk of infection to skinning workers.

Foreign seasonal workers from primarily Eastern European countries, including Romania, Latvia, Lithuania and the Ukraine, may also constitute an individual risk of dissemination because these countries have a high occurrence of SARS-CoV-2. From 26 October 2020, migrant workers are required to produce a negative corona test at the Danish border. At the same time, foreign workers at skinning sites are required to be tested for SARS-CoV-2 regularly once a week. An example of coronavirus has now also been found in Danish mink, and where virus is similar to types typically found in Eastern Europe.

Based on the above, the health authorities recommend the following for employees at skinning sites

- Continuous focus on hygiene, distance, correct use of usual personal protective equipment and isolation of infected people and their close contacts if infection is found among the employees
 - Personal protective equipment will be working clothes, usually boiler suit, apron, gloves and possibly respiratory protection (the latter depends on the type/quality of the wood dust used in the process).
- test for novel coronavirus before commencing the skinning work and subsequently once a week for all employees.
- thorough instructions and information on the above for all employees at the skinning site
- division of workers into small groups (approx. 4-8 people), at work as well as during leisure time, in order to prevent large infection chains if infection occurs at a skinning site.

Experiences show that it is not sufficient to implement protective measures, but that these must be backed up by counselling and guidance, access to the correct protective equipment and control of whether the protective measures are understood and complied with.

Employers offering accommodation for their employees are encouraged to ensure that corona infection is also prevented in the home and during any ride shares from home to the working place.

<https://www.sst.dk/da/Udgivelser/2020/Forebyggelse-af-smittespredning-med-ny-coronavirus-i-boliger-for-tilrejsende-arbejdstagere>

To ensure that the foreign workers at the skinning sites are familiar with the Danish recommendations, they should receive instructions upon arrival, and the employer must ensure that personal protective equipment is compliant with the requirements for protection against infection, and that it is used correctly. The employer must have a plan for self-isolation if COVID-19 is established in an employee, if he/she is close contact of an infected person, or if he/she shows symptoms. The municipality in question may be contacted and may refer persons who are in Denmark to the municipal isolation facilities.

Training programme upon arrival to Denmark must take the health authorities' and the working environment authorities' recommendation as its point of departure and must be conducted in an understandable language.

Training programme

- Short summary of the current situation regarding corona and mink in DK.
- What is SARS-CoV-2
 - Infection source, route of transmission, prevention of dissemination (the health authorities' recommendations).
- Procedures if infected with COVID-19
 - Infected, close contact or symptoms of infection
 - Self-isolation and quarantine options
- Conduct in society and rules on social gathering, shopping etc. (Recommendations outside working hours)
- Protective measures at the skinning site, use of personal protective equipment (the Danish Working Environment Authority's and the Danish Health Authority's recommendations)
 - Demonstration of and practice in the use of protective equipment
- Regular testing - booking of and result of test
- Access to information in relevant languages

For further information, please see the Danish Health Authority's guidelines at www.sst.dk/da/corona