



**DALLA PARTE
DEGLI ANIMALI**

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COVID AND MINKS: 3.000 MINKS CULLED TODAY IN PADUA, ON THE SECOND ITALIAN FARM WITH A CONFIRMED OUTBREAK OF CORONAVIRUS.

LAV: NO MORE DELAYS, ETHICS AND PUBLIC HEALTH REQUIRE THE MINISTER OF HEALTH TO CHANGE THE TEMPORARY SUSPENSION (EXPIRING ON DECEMBER 31ST) OF THESE FARMS INTO A PERMANENT BAN, AND PARLIAMENT TO APPROVE OUR AMENDMENT TO THE BUDGET LAW TO ENSURE THE DISMANTLING OF THE LAST 5 ITALIAN FARMS.

"The slaughter of 3,000 minks in Padua deeply saddens us, but it is a tragedy foretold, in the second Italian farm found positive to Coronavirus. Ethics and public health require rigorous and necessary production choices in order to avoid such serious suffering. The many consumers who would never buy animal fur are increasingly aware of this" says Simone Pavesi, LAV Animal-free fashion Area.

LAV had already informed about the second Italian mink breeding farm outbreak of coronavirus last February, after the positivity intercepted by the ULSS6 Euganea in the local breeding farm of Villa del Conte (Padua) and detected during the first day of sampling in implementation of the compulsory screening ordered by the Minister of Health on December 21st.

"On December 31st the temporary suspension of mink farming will expire, which means that if the Government or Parliament do not intervene in time, Italian mink farms will be allowed to resume full operations from January 1st, continuing to exploit tens of thousands of animals for fur production and, at the same time, putting public health at risk. We ask the Minister of Health Roberto Speranza to immediately intervene with a definitive ban on fur farming, and the Parliament to support the amendment (n.157.0.4 Sen. De Petris) to the Budget Law, proposed by LAV, for the dismantling and reconversion of the last 5 Italian mink farms" - continues Simone Pavesi, LAV Animal-Free Fashion Area.

Once the infection was confirmed in February, the destiny of the approximately 3,000 minks housed in the Villa del Conte (Padua) facility seemed to be already marked by the inevitable immediate culling (as provided for by the Health Minister's Order of 21 November 2020). However, the

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farmer had started an administrative dispute (appeal no. 4119 of 2021) against the order of culling issued by ULSS6 (no. 58302 of 14 April), despite further confirmation of the positive serological tests in 100% of the animals sampled.

The Regional Administrative Court of Lazio (Section III Quater, sentence of 5 July, published on 13 September 2021 and not appealed by the farmer) could only reject the farmer's appeal, confirming that: "[...] the administration (ULSS6) correctly applied the precautionary principle, in order to avoid the risk of further spread of the virus in humans, "through excreta and/or secretions" of the farmed mink, "even in the presence of humoral immunity", and taking into account that "it is conceivable that asynchronous cycles of infection may occur between different animals", if they are housed in different sheds (as in this case).[...]"

On December 14th, eight months later, ULSS6 Euganea has implemented its slaughter order, putting an end to the prolonged agony of thousands of animals that in the meantime have continued to survive in the cramped cages in which they have always been confined as 'breeding' animals and exploited for the production of fur.

It is appropriate to point out that for the whole of 2020 the (passive) surveillance system introduced by the Ministry of Health did not allow to detect the outbreak in Villa del Conte; in fact, it was the same ULSS6 to declare to LAV that "From May to December 2020 no tests for SARS-CoV-2 were carried out on minks" (<https://www.lav.it/news/nota-ulss6-allevamento-visoni-pd>).

This fact was also confirmed to LAV by the Ministry of Health itself (note of 19/05/2021, prot. n. 12435): 'the introduction of the virus in the breeding farm of Villa del Conte is to be considered prior to the introduction of this updated surveillance system (with diagnostic tests)'.

This hypothesis is supported by the results of the tests conducted in this herd where, on the basis of the documentation acquired, there was only one positive virological test (swab) on the first day of sampling (11 January 2021) while the other 593 swabs (taken between 11 January and 18 March) were negative; following this positivity, as per protocol, serological tests were also carried out and in the first sampling cycle (January), there were 31 positivities out of 70 serological tests (ELISA methodology) and 67 positivities out of 70

neutralisation serological tests; while in the second sampling cycle (February-March) there were 2 (+ 1 doubtful) positivities out of 20 serological tests (ELISA) and 20 positivities out of 20 neutralisation tests.

The Villa del Conte breeding farm had also been the subject of a report for violation of biosecurity regulations, with images released by LAV in November 2020, when the farm was still at full capacity (with over 10,000 minks).

The interception of the infection months after the viral circulation phase of the virus, and confirmed by the fact that 100% of the animals sampled (for serum neutralisation tests) have SARS-CoV-2 antibodies, allowed the farmer to complete the 2020 production cycle, and to obtain and market fur obtained from infected animals.

Now, however, no one will be able to profit from the death of 3,000 'breeding' minks, as it is not permitted to produce fur from animals infected with the coronavirus.

In October LAV launched a new campaign to ask the Government and the Parliament to change the temporary stop to mink breeding, expiring on 31 December, into a definitive ban on breeding animals for fur production.

More than 50,000 people have already signed the new LAV petition (<https://www.lav.it/visoni/>), now we need political intervention!

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