



✉ P.O Box 3451  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84110  
☎ 385-401-4301  
🌐 uarc.io  
🐦 @uarc

August 19, 2020

The Office of Governor Gary R. Herbert  
350 North State Street, Suite 200  
PO Box 142220  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-2220

**Sent via U.S. Mail and Via E-Mail**

Dear Governor Herbert:

I am writing on behalf of Utah Animal Rights Coalition (UARC) and our thousands of members and supporters in the state of Utah to ask that your office take more decisive action to curb the serious public health threat posed by Utah's cruel and harmful mink farming industry. Specifically, we urge you to exercise the authority under your March 6, 2020 Executive Order 2020-1 and Utah Code § 53-2a-209(1) to issue new updated orders to immediately suspend all breeding operations on mink farms in the state of Utah and require COVID-19 testing for all employees on such operations.

According to news reports in national outlets including *The Washington Post*, mink and employees on at least two Utah fur farms have now tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> UARC has filed GRAMA and FOIA requests with various state and federal agencies to learn more about these fur farms and the measures already being undertaken to contain this newly discovered source of infection. However, public comments from the Utah state veterinarian downplaying the potential risk are troubling and seem to indicate that little to nothing is being done at present.

Raising and killing animals on farms for their fur is a despicable, dying industry. In 2019, a Gallup poll found that 45% of Americans responded that "buying and wearing clothing made of animal fur" is "morally wrong," a record high since the annual opinion poll was first conducted in 2001. That same year, the state of California became the first state to ban animal fur products from being manufactured or sold.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brulliard, Karin. "First U.S. cases of coronavirus in minks found at Utah fur farms." *The Washington Post*. August 17, 2020. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2020/08/17/coronavirus-mink-first-us-cases/>.

<sup>2</sup> Friedman, Vanessa. "The California fur ban and what it means for you." *The New York Times*. October 14, 2019. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/14/style/fur-ban-california.html>.

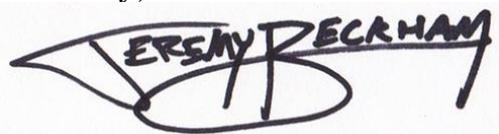
It's unsurprising therefore that half of the mink farms in Utah have closed this year. This is good news for the countless mink who would have been isolated in shoebox-sized cages on disgusting mink farms, where they suffer severe psychological distress and spin endlessly in circles due to the cruel conditions of confinement. We have attached some photographs to this letter which represent standard operating conditions on mink farms. The only time these intelligent animals ever leave their cages is when they are suffocated or gassed so their skins can be removed from their bodies and turned into an unnecessary apparel product for heartless people who apparently get a twisted pleasure from flaunting their indifference and greed. Unnecessarily abusing and killing animals is wrong, period.

The 38 fur farms currently operating in Utah represent an unacceptable public health risk to our community. Laboratory findings confirm that mustelids are highly susceptible to infection from the virus that causes COVID-19, and the presence of COVID-19 cases among fur farm employees strongly suggests that bidirectional zoonotic transmission from animals to humans and vice versa is occurring on these operations. Utah's mink farms produce an ugly, unnecessary, luxury item, mostly for consumers abroad. These farms cannot be deemed an "essential business activity" by any stretch of the imagination, and steps should be immediately taken to contain the risk they pose and phase out their existence.

UARC urges that your office take two immediate actions: (1) order mink farms to suspend all current and future breeding operations, ensuring that after the current stock of animals is depleted, these mink farms will close for good, and (2) immediate regular testing for COVID-19 among all mink farm workers or people who have close personal contact with these operations, similar to the testing protocols in place at slaughterhouses which kill animals for their flesh.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We know that you are a compassionate person who cares about the health of Utahns and does not want to see any sentient being suffer. We are confident that your office will take our suggestions seriously. I look forward to hearing from you or a representative of your office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JEREMY BECKHAM". The signature is stylized, with the first letters of each name being larger and more prominent. The signature is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Jeremy Beckham, MPA, MPH  
Executive Director  
Utah Animal Rights Coalition (UARC)  
385-401-4301  
[jeremy@uarc.io](mailto:jeremy@uarc.io)











