

Canadian Furs — Otter And Sea Otter

Canada produces the finest quality otter in the world and some of the best pelts come from northern Quebec and Ontario. Those from northern Quebec possess an unequalled silky texture and density of fur.

During the 1967-1968 season some 15,800 otter pelts valued at \$323,000 were taken in Canada. Prime producing areas were Ontario, 7,542 pelts; Quebec, 2,982 pelts; Manitoba, 1,767 pelts and British Columbia, 926 pelts.

During processing the long guard hairs are removed, the same as with beaver — however, unlike

beaver, the underfur of the otter is not sheared.

Some otter pelts are first bleached and then dyed in pastel colors — a fairly recently perfected process which helps camouflage the otter's light-colored lower underfur and results in a very attractive garment.

The northern otter is found throughout Canada's forested areas along the larger streams and lakes, and although it prefers water the otter will travel overland using a peculiar bounding and sliding gait. In winter it is often found around areas of open water near falls or rapids.

Like ermine and mink it is a member of the weasel family and has a long body, very short legs and webbed feet. Its long tapering tail is almost as thick as its body at the butt. Color ranges from medium brown to near black.

A playful fellow, the otter will spend hours sliding or tobogganing down steep river banks. They also enjoy tag and hide-and-seek — their own watery version, of course.

In late April from one to four young are born in dens under hanging rocks or among old tree roots. Sometimes the otter will

burrow into the river bank making an entrance to the den under water. Both parents care for the young which are able to fend for themselves at around three months of age.

The otter's diet consists mainly of fish supplemented by waterfowl, frogs, muskrats and other small animals.

Canada may some day have its own herd of sea otters. Last Year about 30 of the rare animals were brought from the Aleutian Islands to a site off the northwest coast of Vancouver Island, where, it is hoped, they will thrive among the many small islands and reefs of the area.

Discovered on Bering Island in 1742, the sea otter starred in an adventurous period of northwest American history. This fur was the prize of the fur industry. Chinese merchants exchanged spices, fine silks and pearls for the deep, silky furs.

For 150 years the sea otter was hunted at a fierce pace until, by the end of the 19th century, it was almost extinct. In 1911, under international treaty, it became unlawful to kill the sea otter in Alaskan waters or on the adjacent high seas.

As time passed the sea otter population grew from a few rare specimens overlooked on the isolated Alaskan coast islands to some 3,000. Biologists of the Alaska State Department of Fish and Game who supervise the

pelt harvest believe present conservation policies will slowly bring back this valuable fur animal.

In 1967, Aleut hunters took approximately 1,000 pelts. These were sold in Seattle the following year. This was the first such sale in 55 years and the top lot of four pelts realized \$2,300

per pelt. It is hoped present sea otter numbers will permit the marketing of a similar number each year.

The fur of the sea otter is a rich, dense and silky wool, with no real guard hairs. Colors vary from pale-grey brown to black and many have a sprinkling of silvery hairs.



Otter

Car Spot Check In April

The spot-check system presently operating in Ontario places the responsibility for the mechanical condition of his car upon the individual motorist.

Throughout April, the Canada Safety Council will be holding a car check campaign to urge all drivers

in the province to have their cars checked for safety by competent technicians. The Council estimates that if all cars were in safe mechanical condition, 500 deaths, 17,000 injuries and 35,000 property accidents could be avoided each year in Canada.

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Raising Replacer Dairy Cattle

A new type of farm specialist may emerge in the dairy industry in the next few years.

He will be an expert in raising calves as replacement heifers for the farmers who are interested only in producing milk.

There are already signs that dairy farmers in the United States don't want to be bothered raising calves and heifers, but prefer to concentrate their money, skills and time on their milking cows.

Dr. A.D.L. Gorrill, an animal nutritionist at the Canada Agriculture Research Station,

Fredericton, N.B., says he foresees the day when Ontario and Quebec dairy farmers will have their replacement cattle contract raised by farmers in the Maritimes.

"The Maritimes is the logical location for this new type of business because we have relatively large quantities of good quality forage and pasture available," says Dr. Gorrill.

Ontario and Quebec dairy farmers will be more interested in their milking herd because they enjoy a transportation cost advantage for milk. On the other hand, they will be less

interested in using high-priced capital, land and labor to raise calves and heifers.

Because the Maritimes are not as close to the major cities and the big milk markets, farmers will find it more attractive to use their land, skill, buildings and forage to raise calves and heifers on contract.

The principal is the same as the one which currently operates in the hog and beef industries. In hogs, there is an increasing separation between the experts who keep sows and raise weaner pigs and the ones who raise

hogs to market weights. In beef cattle, ranchers in Alberta produce the majority of Canada's calves, which are sold to other farmers who raise them to market weight.

Dr. Gorrill warns, however, the contract raising of dairy calves can create certain problems.

"Large numbers of calves raised together produce more disease problems. These can be overcome through proper feeding, management and housing. 'Maintaining continuity of a breeding program is another problem. Calves must be permanently identified to make certain the dairyman gets his own heifers back prior to freshening.'"

Whether or not heifer calves are contract reared, certain guidelines are important, says Dr. Gorrill. Heifers should be raised to start producing milk at an early age, using local grown feeds as much as possible.

The newborn calf should receive the mother's first milk, called colostrum, within a few hours after birth. If they don't, they are more susceptible to calf diseases such as diarrhea and pneumonia.

It is a good idea to keep some frozen colostrum on hand, says Dr. Gorrill.

Frozen colostrum can be thawed and warmed up to feed to calves whose mothers have died during calving or cannot supply colostrum to their calves.

Holstein and Brown Swiss heifers should be bred at about 15 months of age to freshen at 24 months of age.

They should weigh about 800 pounds when bred and 1,200 pounds at freshening. Guernseys and Ayrshires should freshen at 24 months, but should weigh about 900 pounds.

Jerseys should freshen at 22 to 24 months of age and weigh about 800 pounds.

Holstein and Brown Swiss heifers need to gain 1 1/2 pounds of body weight a day from birth until they are two years old to weigh 1,200 pounds at freshening.

The smaller dairy breeds need to gain about 1.1 to 1.3 pounds of body weight a day to reach their recommended weights at freshening. A feeding program should be aimed at these objectives.

Dr. Gorrill says it is important to avoid underfeeding or the heifers will grow slowly and sexual maturity will be delayed. On the other hand, overfeeding can be harmful to milk production.

If you don't have a scale to weigh animals, a good estimate of body weight is obtained by using a tape, says Dr. Gorrill.

Tobacco In A Package

By Doug Galbraith

The outlook on the new season for the tobacco farmer seems quite gloomy with a much larger cut in acreage than last year looming as a big possibility.

The overseas delegation of the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board still awaits final word from Great Britain on the amount of Canadian tobacco the U.K. will take from the 1970 crop.

In the discussions with Britain's Tobacco Advisory Board, however, it was indicated that the requirements will be down to 54 million pounds compared with 64 million pounds last year. The one bright ray in the outlook is that Denmark may take some Canadian flue.

Another good sign is that Canada's consumption seems to be up about two per cent over last year.

The speculation on the amount of acreage cut ranges from 35 to 50 per cent. However, Joe Czubak, forecast at his zone meeting that the cut should be about 43 per cent depending on the overseas and domestic requirements.

This would seem to be about as close as you can get after looking at the statistics.

Anyway I agree that this will be about the cut when acreage is set at the close of the market.

The 1969 crop stands out as the largest ever grown in Canada. It looks like the final average will be slightly under the 67 cents a pound mark.

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