

BEAVER

The North American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) is the sole representative of the Family Castoridae (Order Rodentia) in North America.

Today, after almost four centuries of commercial exploitation, the Beaver is a thriving species, and in many places it is abundant enough to be considered a nuisance. The word Beaver comes from the Old English “beofor”.

DESCRIPTION

On land the Beaver is a large, clumsy, hump-backed animal, rarely venturing far from water. Many adaptations enable it to successfully exploit the freshwater environment. In water it is sleek and torpedo-shaped, propelling itself with its powerful, webbed hindfeet and tail. It maneuvers with its large, dorsally flattened, scale-covered tail.

The Beaver’s fur provides insulation in its den and in the water. The underfur is thin, soft, wavy, and extremely dense. The colour ranges from black to gray, and the underfur of western Beavers is reddish-tipped.

Fully prime underfur is 2–3 cm (0.8"–1.2") long in the kidney region. In comparison, the guard hairs are stiff, thick, and long, gradually widening at the distal end and tapering at the tip. The guard hairs are 5–6 cm (2.0"–2.4") long when fully grown, and range in colour from black to reddish. The guard hairs keep water and dirt away from the underfur.

Peak primeness occurs between December and March, depending on latitude. Although most Beavers appear reddish dark brown, they can range from jet black to pale silvery or blond. There can be considerable colour variation among Beavers in any one region.

The use of a large number of sections for Beavers is less common today than it was in the past. In Canada, which produces well over half the beavers taken annually in North America, pelts are normally sorted into Eastern and Western groups.

GRADING SECTIONS

Eastern: Pelts from Eastern Canada—east of the Ontario-Manitoba border. Also included are pelts from the eastern United States with Minnesota as the dividing line. Pelts from the Eastern Section are generally darker and finer in texture than those from other sections. There are two weights found in Eastern pelts, Heavy and Semi. The Heavy weight pelts tend to be Canadian in origin and will include some pelts from the North Eastern United States. The underfur is deep and heavy. The Semi weight pelts are mostly of United States origin. The underfur is not as heavy.

Western: Pelts from Western Canada—west of the Ontario-Manitoba border. Pelts from the Western United States—west of Minnesota—are also included. Pelts from this section are larger than most Eastern Beavers, and are also paler in colour and coarser in texture.



(a) Extra Dark

(b) Dark



(c) Brown

COLOUR CATEGORIES OF EASTERN BEAVER PELTS



(a) Dark

(b) Brown

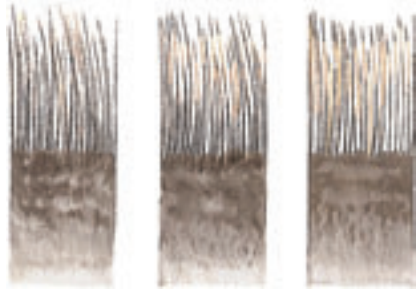


(c) Pale



(d) Extra Pale

COLOUR CATEGORIES OF WESTERN BEAVER PELTS



(a) Extra Dark

(b) Dark

(c) Brown

CROSS-SECTION OF FUR — EASTERN BEAVER PELTS



(a) Dark

(b) Brown

(c) Pale

(d) Extra Pale

CROSS-SECTION OF FUR — WESTERN BEAVER PELTS

SIZE

The size of beaver pelts is determined by summing the length and width of the pelt.

2XL	Over 165 cm	Over 65"
XL	152-165 cm	60"-65"
L	140-152 cm	55"-60"
LM	130-140 cm	51"-55"
MED	119-130 cm	47"-51"
SM	107-119 cm	42"-47"
X-SM	Under 107 cm	Under 42"

COLOUR

XDARK
PALE

DARK
XPALE

BROWN



(a) Canada Eastern

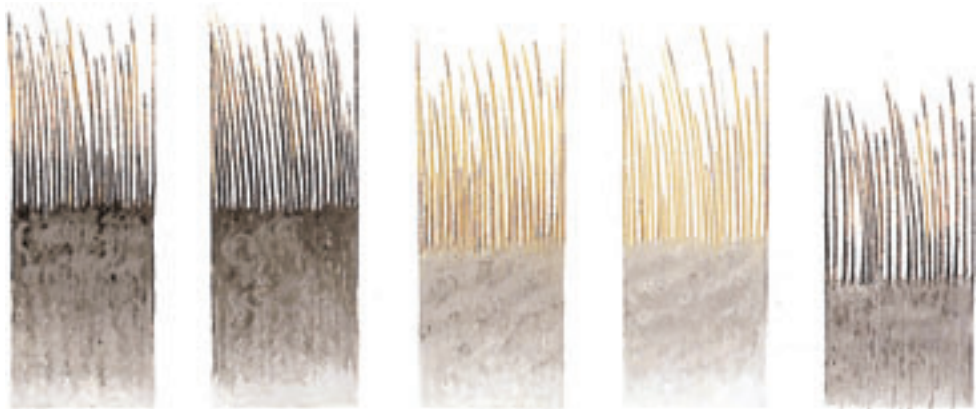
(b) US Eastern



(c) Canada Western or U.S. Western

(d) Canada Western or U.S. Western

(e) U.S. Southern



(f) Canada Eastern

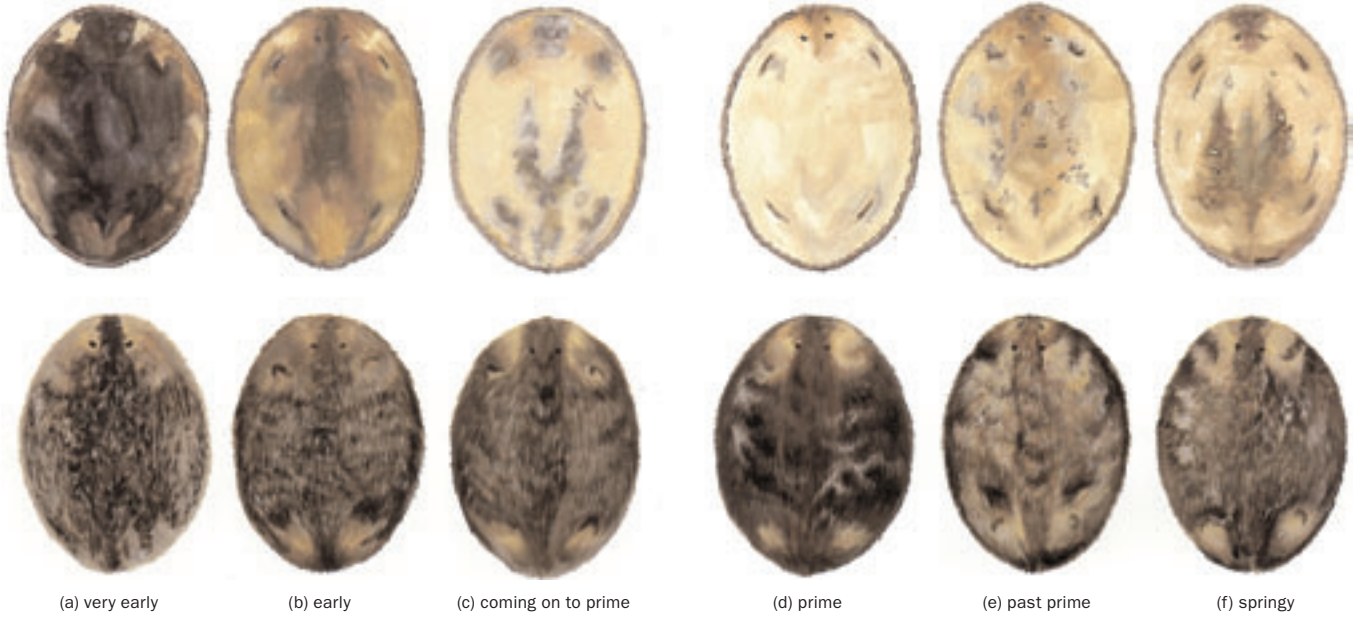
(g) US Eastern

(h) Western

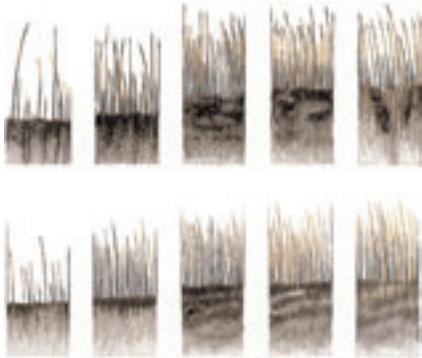
(i) Western

(j) Southern

**BEAVER PELTS FROM REPRESENTATIVE SECTIONS IN NORTH AMERICA SHOWING VARIATION IN COLOUR AND FUR LENGTH
TOP TWO ROWS: WHOLE PELTS | BOTTOM: CROSS-SECTIONS OF FUR**



PRIMING SEQUENCE OF BEAVER PELT
TOP: LEATHER SIDE | BOTTOM: FURSIDE



(a) very early (b) early (c) coming on to prime (d) prime (e) late early

PRIMING SEQUENCE OF THE BEAVER
TOP: CROSS-SECTIONS OF FUR FROM NECK
BOTTOM: CROSS-SECTIONS OF FUR FROM RUMP

CATALOGUE SECTION I

CODE	GRADE	DEFINITION
SEL	SELECT	The best possible quality. Fur is of strong density, fully covered. Winter-Prime leather that is of a clear, golden colour. Leather and fur are free of imperfections.
I	FIRST	Good to Average quality. Fur is of less density than SEL, also fully covered. Leather may be Prime or of a slight blue colour and may have minor blemishes.
I-II	FIRST AND SECOND	I-II SILKY: Flat quality. Fur is of weak or loose density, fully covered. Leather colour may range from clear to blue. May have more blemishes or imperfections than I. I-II COARSE: Similar to above but lacks coverage and/or has "fallen timber" appearance. May have up to 3 small imperfections.

II	SECOND	Very Flat quality. Fur has very weak/loose density, may be open (i.e. not covered). May have more blemishes or imperfections than I. Usually late Spring skins or Early skins.
VSL	VERY SLIGHT	SEL or I quality with no more than 3 small imperfections resulting in minimal fur loss.
SDG	SLIGHT DAMAGED	SDG (Gd.): SEL or I quality with 4 to 6 small imperfections, or up to 3 larger imperfections. SDG (Avg.): I-II SILKY quality with 4 to 6 small imperfections, or up to 3 larger imperfections.

CATALOGUE SECTION III

CODE	GRADE	DEFINITION
DGD	DAMAGED	DGD (Gd.): SEL or I quality with up to 10% damage DGD (Avg.): SEL or I quality with up to 25% damage or I-II quality with up to 15% damage. DGD (Pr.): I-II quality with up to 50% damage, II quality with up to 25% damage.
III	THIRD	Much flatter than II with minimal leather damage. Blue to black leather. Very early fall skins.
IV	FOURTH	Badly damaged skins (over 50% damage), burnt skins with very-limited-to-no commercial value.

Blemishes

Cosmetic irregularities which result in no fur loss.

Imperfections

These must all result in fur loss that would require repair after dressing.

Leather: bites, scars, holes, false cuts, taints, trapper snare marks and very dark hard spots.

Fur: rubs, clips, matts.