

OTTER

About equal numbers of river otters are harvested in Canada and the United States each year. Major areas of harvest are Ontario, Louisiana, Quebec, Manitoba, Florida, Georgia, and Alaska. River otter pelts are valued because of their durability in garments. In fact, they are the standard against which other furs are rated for durability.

SECTIONS

Central: Pelts from this section tend to have regular to heavyweight leather. Very heavy leather is especially common in coastal areas. Pelts tend to be darker, with a small proportion of paler colours in the harvest.

Northeast Canada: This area produces a high proportion of Extra Dark pelts. The leather is lightweight and pelts are often frost dried, resulting in a highly desired parchment leather.

Northwest: Western pelts are generally paler than those from eastern sections. Pelts from the Northwest section are large and have lightweight leather similar to those from the Northeast Canada section, although they are not as light as Northeast Canada pelts. The fur is generally quite dense and varies from Pale to Dark in colour.

West Central: These pelts tend to be smaller, with medium to heavyweight leather.

Eastern U.S.: This area produces large pelts with heavy leather. Most pelts are in the Brown to Dark categories.

Southeast: Pelts from this section have heavy leather but only semi-heavy fur. Often these pelts have a long nap because the under wool is short, so the guard hairs are easily singed. Colours range from Brown to Dark Brown.

Southern: Pelts from this section are much flatter than those from other sections, and the guard hairs are easily singed. Colours range from Light Brown to Dark Brown. These pelts may be valuable for lightweight garments if they are straight-haired.

SIZE

XL	Over 96.5 cm × 20 cm	Over 38" × 8"
LGE	86 cm × 20 cm	34" × 8"
LM	81 cm × 18 cm	32" × 7"
MED	76 cm × 16.5 cm	30" × 6.5"
SML	Under 76 cm × 16.5 cm	Under 30" × 6.5"

NOTE: An Otter that measures 38" in length and 7" at the skirt, will be sized as a LGE Otter, not an XL pelt. Square inches play an important role in determining the price. For every 1" you are narrow on the skirt, you will be deducted on your length by 2".

COLOUR

Extra Dark: The under wool of these pelts is grayish at the base, becoming progressively darker until the tips are a very dark bluish black. The guard hairs match the tips of the under wool, giving the pelt a lustrous, very dark, jet black appearance.

Dark: The under wool of these pelts is light gray at the base and darkens gradually to very dark brown at the tips. The guard hairs are black, as in the Extra Dark category. The pelt has a lustrous, very dark chestnut brown or charcoal appearance as a result of the slight brownish tint to its under wool.

Dark Brown: The under wool has a definite dark brown tint at the tips. The guard hairs are also very dark brown, so the pelt has an overall dark brown appearance that is not as shiny as the Extra Dark and Dark categories.

Brown: These pelts have an overall medium brown colour. The top half of the under wool has a brownish tint and there is a medium brown band of colour at the tips of the under wool.

Pale: These pelts are light brown in appearance. The under wool has a light brown bar at the tips but is grayish brown over most of its length; the guard hairs are light brown.

Extra Pale: The under wool of these pelts is pale creamy white or grayish white at the base and gradually darkens to light grayish brown at the tips. The guard hairs are very light brown, giving a beige or light brown appearance to the pelt.



(a) extra dark

(b) dark

(c) dark brown

(d) brown

(e) pale

(f) extra pale

COLOUR CATEGORIES OF RIVER OTTER



(a) clear



(b) slight off



(c) off

CLARITY OF RIVER OTTER



(a) straight



(b) single



(c) badly singed

CROSS-SECTION OF RIVER OTTER

CLARITY

River otter pelts are divided into three groups based on the amount of reddish brown tint in the under wool, especially at the midline of the back.

Clear: These pelts have brightly colored, clear under wool with no yellowish or reddish brown tint. In clear pelts the gradation in colour is gradual, so there is no obvious break between the under wool and guard hairs.

Slight Off: In these pelts the under wool is dull with a slight yellowish tint. This gives paler pelts (i.e., Brown to Extra Pale) a slight reddish brown tint.

Off: These pelts have a yellowish tint to the under wool and a reddish tint to the guard hairs. This condition is common in late-caught furs and gives them a reddish brown cast. Also, these pelts are usually singed.

CATALOGUE SECTION I

CODE	GRADE	DEFINITION
SEL	SELECT	Best possible quality, prime pelts. Guard hair is straight with ample amount of under wool. Leather is clear, with a white or creamy appearance. Fur and leather are free of imperfections.
I	FIRST	Very good quality. Guard hair is straight. Leather may be light blue, and may have a limited amount of imperfections.
I-II	FIRST AND SECOND	May have small holes or knife cuts located near the head, skirt or belly. Leather may be light blue or slatey in colour. Lacking density of underwool (loose). STRAIGHT HAIR: Guard hair is straight. SINGED: Guard hair is curled. BAD SINGE: Guard hair is very curled.
II	SECOND	Guard hair straight. Leather may be blue. GOOD: Flat, weak under wool with lack of finish. POOR: Flatter under wool than GOOD, weaker under wool with lack of finish.
SDG	SLIGHT DAMAGED	GOOD: Guard hair is straight. SELECT or FIRST quality skins that are up to 10% damaged. POOR: Guard hair is singled. I-II and II quality skins that are up to 10% damaged.

CATALOGUE SECTION III

CODE	GRADE
DGD	DAMAGED
III / IV	FOURTH

DEFINITION

DGD (Gd.): SELECT or FIRST quality skins that are up to 25% damaged.

DGD (Pr.): I-II and II quality skins that are up to 25% damaged.

SEL and I quality skins that are up to 50% damaged.

Badly rubbed, woolly.

Badly damaged Summer pelts.

Very limited commercial value.



(a) very early

(b) early

(c) prime

(d) late

PRIMING SEQUENCE OF RIVER OTTER