Canada’s Fur Trade at a Glance

It is often said that Canada was built on the fur trade. Though furs had been traded long before European settlers arrived, the **dramatic expansion of Canada’s fur trade** is traced to 1608, when Samuel de Champlain founded what would become Quebec City. In the centuries that followed, it was fur that provided the incentive to explore the vast interior of the continent.

Until the late 19th century, Canada produced exclusively wild fur, but today about **a third of the pelts are wild and the rest comes from small, family-run farms**. Most fur farms raise mink, followed by fox. The most-trapped furbearers are muskrat, then beaver, marten, squirrel and raccoon.

Today, about **60,000 Canadians are employed in the fur trade** as farmers, trappers, traders, processors, designers, craftspeople and retailers.

**Animal Welfare**

The welfare of animals is important to the fur trade both for **moral and ethical reasons**, and also because **healthy animals produce the best furs**.

Standards of care for fur farms have been developed by vets, biologists, welfare experts, and farmers.
themselves, covering all aspects of husbandry to ensure high standards of animal welfare.

Trappers are required to use modern trap systems that are constantly being refined to ensure they are humane and do not catch non-target species. While humane trap development has been an international effort, North America has led the way. Steel-toothed traps have been banned in most regions for decades.

**Fur Is Green**

The fur trade is environment-friendly. Farmers feed their animals left-overs from human food production; manure and bedding make fertiliser; and carcasses are composted or made into bio-fuel. Mink oil is used to condition leather and in cosmetics. Nothing is wasted.

Trappers are also conservationists, providing information to wildlife managers, and helping keep populations within the carrying capacity of their habitat. Carcasses are left for carnivores to feed on in winter, when food is scarce.

**Auction Houses**

Most furs in Canada are sold at public auction. North American Fur Auctions, in Toronto, is the continent’s largest auction house, and sells both farmed and wild fur. It traces its roots back to 1670 and the historic Hudson’s Bay Company.

Fur Harvesters Auction in Ontario specialises in wild furs and farmed fox. It is the only trapper-owned auction house in the world, representing a cooperative partnership with equal ownership by native and non-native trappers.

**Species trapped**

- **Muskrat** 28%
- **Beaver** 21%
- **Marten** 13%
- **Squirrel** 9%
- **Raccoon** 5%

**Farmed mink**

- 210 mink farms
- 8 provinces
- 3 million pelts
- $150 million / year

**Farmed fox**

- 35 fox farms
- 6 provinces
- 5000 pelts / year

**TRUTH ABOUT FUR** brings together leading fur authorities in North America to provide accurate information about this remarkable heritage industry. We give a voice to the people who carry on this unique artisanal tradition, working as farmers, trappers, traders, processors, designers, craftspeople, and retailers. For more facts about the North American fur trade, please visit [www.TruthAboutFur.com](http://www.TruthAboutFur.com). September 2017.