

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 Frenchman Samuel de Champlain founded what would become Quebec City. In the following centuries, it was fur that provided the incentive to explore the continent's vast interior.

Until the late 19th century, all Canadian fur was wild, but today about two-thirds of its pelts **come 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, to cover all aspects of husbandry and 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 nontarget species. While humane trap development has been an international effort. North America has led the way. Old-fashioned traps with sharp, unpadded teeth have not been used for decades and are banned for most species.



Fur Is Green

The fur trade is environment-friendly. Farmers feed their animals leftovers from human food production; manure and bedding make fertiliser; and carcasses are composted or made into biofuel. 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 capacities of their habitats. 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. Some producers, however, choose to sell to local brokers or directly to manufacturers.

The largest auction house in North America is Fur Harvesters Auction in Ontario. Specialising in wild furs and farmed fox, FHA is the only trapperowned auction house in the world, representing a cooperative partnership with equal ownership by native and non-native trappers.

Photos: Canada Mink Breeders Association; Gaetan Fournier; Fur Institute of Canada; Fur Harvesters Auction; Cahill Fur Collection.



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. September 2025.