

Fur Report

The fur market continues to do well. Almost surprisingly well, as the season progressed the fur market appeared to get stronger especially on some specific items. The weather conditions basically all winter were favorable for trappers. Throughout most of the United States the weather stayed mild allowing trappers to make very favorable catches.

The catches were very favorable wherever there was an ample supply of animals to be trapped. Quantities of muskrat in many parts of the United States has declined greatly over the past couple decades. Trappers were certainly eagerly trapping them this past season however, in some areas it was limited how many could be caught. Overall in the eastern United States the amount of muskrat is minimal in most areas. The past few years both South Dakota and North Dakota has had an ample amount of muskrat and this year Minnesota did as well.

It is hard for some people to believe that the populations are down so much especially when you take a state like Ohio. There are a few areas in Ohio where some trappers have a nice population of muskrat and these trappers in these given areas claim there is no shortage of muskrat. However, they do not realize that in the big picture there are many areas of the state that the muskrat are very scarce. Yet in many of these areas where they are scarce the populations used to be abundant. There are two things that can hurt muskrat populations too dry and too wet. There are certainly other factors that are the cause of the muskrat populations being down, but in short order these factors can hurt populations. Areas being too dry such as a small creeks going dry pushes the muskrats out completely. And being overly dry is normally more of a problem for muskrat populations than being too wet. However I think that the population being down so bad in some areas of Ohio this past year was because of the amount of flooding we had a year ago in the spring. Last year we had flooding basically weekly in some areas. Flooding at the wrong time can kill off many, or most, or all of the kit muskrats.

Over and beyond flooding or areas being too dry there appears to be a problem with why the muskrat populations are down. As for an area being too dry or flooding problems those problems usually just affect muskrat populations in short term, but our populations seem to have been affected long term. For anyone in Ohio or a surrounding state, that thinks the population cannot drop to almost nonexistent as it was in some parts of Ohio this last season, just ask the people of the states of Louisiana or Mississippi. Both of these states the muskrat populations are now almost nonexistent. Yet both Louisiana and Mississippi were both big producing muskrat states at one time.

Muskrat price are very good now and basically at all-time highs. Next season the demand for muskrat should be very good. The Ohio Division of Wildlife is starting a study on the possible problems of the shorter muskrat populations. I think that it is good the Division of Wildlife is doing a study on the populations. I also do not think that over trapping muskrats is the overall problem. However, I do think that keeping the muskrat season open into February and March could be part of the problem as many of the muskrats that are caught late season are muskrats that could have reproduced for the next season.

The raccoon populations are the opposite for the most part than the muskrat, as there seem to be a large population of raccoon especially during sweet corn time. Farmers seem to be able to put a sweet corn patch out in the middle of nowhere not near any trees and yet raccoon can find it just when the sweet corn is getting ripe. Raccoon is one item that has some room to improve in price and demand. There has been a lot of concern that there are too many raccoon available for the amount of demand however, if the price of the ranch mink and ranch fox and other wild fur stay strong there is only one direction for the raccoon to go and that is up.

The price for red fox was certainly up this past season. The demand and price for red fox should remain good for next season. The price and demand for gray fox might be more selective, but the price and demand should remain overall satisfactory.

The demand for the better quality coyote should also remain strong. Even the flatter type of coyote should be marketable, but the important thing is that they are fully furred. Coyote that are rubbed, poorly furred, or damaged have had and will probably continue to have little value.

Overall wild mink sold well this past season. The price and demand for wild mink should hold well for next season as long as the ranch mink market stays strong. Otter is also an item that sold well this past season and should be in very good demand next season.

The price of beaver surprised many this past season. At the beginning of the season there was talk that there would probably be some increase in price on beaver, but it was a surprise how fast and high the beaver got. Many beaver can be produced in many parts of the county, but the demand and price for beaver should start out very favorable next season.

Overall the fur market looks to be very favorable for next season. It is important to support our state and National trappers associations. Keith Winkler, Sterling Ohio