

UCSU 20/6.22/6.513
c.2

SERVICE

RECEIVED

Fur harvesting in Colorado

IN ACTION
MAY 24 1990
COLORADO STATE LIBRARY
State Publications Library

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

Major L. Boddicker^{1/}

no. 6.513

COLORADO STATE PUBLICATIONS LIBRARY
UCSU20/6.22/6.513 c.2 local
Boddicker, Major L./Fur harvesting in Co



3 1799 00013 5889

Quick Facts

Colorado's wide variation in climates as a result of varying altitudes complicates the management of furbearing animals.

Fur harvesting seasons are set at average dates that do not necessarily correspond to dates of prime pelts on a statewide basis.

Trappers should know when to expect prime animals at various conditions and altitudes to minimize unprime catches and to increase the quality of furs taken.

According to Colorado trapping regulations, trapping for fox, bobcat and animals in the weasel family ends on March 31; only beaver, muskrat and varmints can be taken after that date.

Historically, the best fur markets occur during January and February, but trappers should check current fur sale results for market verification.

Colorado and other mountainous states have wide variations in climate as a result of variations in altitude. The state has climates similar to Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, South Dakota, northern Canada, and the tundra of Alaska all within a day's drive. This complicates the management of furbearing animals because season dates set for fur primeness will not necessarily fit the conditions of alpine or eastern Colorado trapping.

Seasons are set at average dates that can be enforced and that offer maximum recreational opportunity. These season dates do not necessarily correspond to dates of prime pelts on a statewide basis.

It is important for trappers to know when to expect prime animals at various conditions and altitudes of the state to minimize unprime catches and to increase the quality of furs as well as the income from sales of those furs.

Below is a guide to dates and areas of prime

and some pointers to help plan the coming fur harvests.

Furbearers	Trapping areas	Dates of primeness
Coyotes and foxes (reds, grays & swifts)	Eastern plains south of I-70: mountains below 5,000 feet	Nov. 15-Feb. 15
	Eastern plains north of I-70: mountains 5,000-7,000 feet	Nov. 1-Feb. 28
	Mountains above 7,000 feet	Oct. 15-Mar. 15* (Some years prime animals can be taken April 1)

During warm, dry winters, canines start breaking early—many in January—and a fully prime pelt may be taken only during the period from Dec. 15-Jan. 15. Unprime animals caught late, if foot damage is not severe, can be stunned with a blow across the nose and released.

Bobcats	Eastern plains	Dec. 15-Mar. 1
	Below 7,500 feet (in mountains)	Dec. 1-Mar. 15
	Above 7,500 feet	Nov. 15-Mar. 31

Cats prime up later than canines. Bobcats may have a market value before and after the above dates, but it will benefit the trapper to harvest them within these date limits.

Raccoon	Eastern plains and below 7,500 feet	Nov. 15-Feb. 15
	Above 7,500 feet	Nov. 1-Mar. 1

Coons vary a great deal on primeness with age and between individual animals. To ensure a high probability of a prime animal, they should be trapped within these dates. Coons also have a tendency to break early. If they show signs of breaking, and foot damage is not severe, consider releasing unprime animals.

Skunks (striped and spotted)	Eastern plains and below 7,500 feet	Nov. 15-Feb. 1
	Above 7,500 feet	Nov. 1-Feb. 28
Weasel	Below 7,500 feet	Nov. 1-Feb. 28
	Above 7,500 feet	Oct. 15-Mar. 15
Marten		Oct. 15-Apr. 15*
Mink	Below 7,500 feet	Nov. 1-Feb. 28
	Above 7,500 feet	Oct. 15-Apr. 30*

As with other furbearers, the mustelids prime earlier at high elevations. Skunks, though a problem to handle, have relatively strong markets. Markets also exist for the musk glands. Carcasses are excellent baits for trapping animals in the canine or cat families.

^{1/}Major L. Boddicker, CSU extension associate professor, wildlife, animal damage control (revised 1/1/80)

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, John Patrick Jordan, acting director of Extension Service, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523. The CSU Cooperative Extension Service is dedicated to serve all people on an equal and nondiscriminatory basis.

To simplify technical terminology, trade names of products and equipment occasionally will be used. No endorsement of products named is intended nor is criticism implied of products not mentioned.

Badger	Below 7,500 feet	Dec. 1-Feb. 28
	Above 7,500 feet	Nov. 15-Mar. 15

Badger have a tendency to prime up late. Blue badgers are worth much less than prime animals.

Beaver	Below 5,000 feet	Nov. 1-Mar. 15
	5,000 to 8,500 feet	Oct. 15-Apr. 30
	Above 8,500 feet	Oct. 15-May 15

Beaver tend to prime up later and hold longer than other furbearers. In problem access areas, it sometimes is necessary to take them too early or too late in order to be able to take them at all. Beaver pelts that are taken early often sell better than those that are taken late. Spring beaver often have fur badly damaged by fighting.

Muskrat	Below 5,000 feet	Nov. 15-Mar. 31
	5,000 to 8,500 feet	Nov. 1-Apr. 15
	Above 8,500 feet	Nov. 1-Apr. 30

Muskrat fur primes up late; the best pelts are taken during December through February. A great deal of variation is found in muskrat primeness early in the season, depending on age of animal and weather conditions. Beaver and muskrats from inaccessible areas may require early or late trapping. Spring-caught rats often have pelts badly

damaged by cannibalism and fighting. Spring rats stay good very late, however. It is advantageous during spring trapping to use submerged drown sets, as well as many sets in one area, to reduce damage to muskrats in traps. Rats caught on the plains from Oct. 1 to Nov. 1 bring one-half to one-third less than if they are harvested later. Late-caught fur often is bleached and faded, singed, or has a dull, frayed look even if no rubbed spots are evident.

Historically, the best fur markets occur during January and February. Some years March fur sales are high; some years the market is a disaster. Trappers should not trust rumors. If the word is that the market is bad, it is wise to check recent fur-sale results.

Further information on fur markets can be obtained from your local CSU county extension office or the author on the CSU campus. (The author wishes to thank the educational committee of the Colorado Trappers' Association for assistance in developing this trapping guide.)