

Fur Harvesters Auction Inc. - The Only Facility of Its Kind in the World

By Mark Downey



Fur Harvesters Auction Inc. (FHA), located in North Bay, Ontario, is the only facility of its kind in the world. It is totally fur producer owned. The company is jointly owned by the fur harvesters - 50% by non-native and 50% by native. Currently, FHA handles 75% of Ontario's wild fur production. Fur from other provinces and American states also goes through the auction facility.

The trapping industry is not as unregulated as many believe. Trappers are governed by strict laws based on humane harvest methods and conservation-minded ethics. Anyone wishing to become a trapper in the province of Ontario must take a four-week course conducted by a qualified instructor. The course consists of both written and practical examinations and, upon passing, the graduate receives a diploma. This, however, does not give the individual the right to trap.

There are two different types of trapline systems in this province. One is known as the resident trapline system. This type of licence is most common in Southern Ontario and rural farming areas. To acquire a resident trapping licence, written permission from land owners must be obtained and taken to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), along with the graduate's diploma. The MNR then assigns the new trapper his or her licence with the property lots and concessions on which trapping is permitted.

Registered traplines - the second type of trapline system - are vast areas of crown land which often contain several townships. These traplines are most common in Northern Ontario. There are 2,800 registered traplines in the province and up to 18,000 licenced trappers, the majority being resident trappers.

A registered trapline is acquired through written application. When a trapper retires, his or her area becomes vacant. The MNR

will offer the trapline to the applicant with the most points. The point system covers various items, such as years of experience, residency, trapper council membership, and other trapping related criteria. All applicants are screened and through the tallying of each applicant's credentials, a new trapper is appointed to the area.

Both a harvest quota and the types of animals that are to be harvested are documented on the trapper's licence. The quota for beaver is based on two animals per live house. If a trapper has 2,000 acres of permission signed on his area licence, and there are 5 active beaver colonies within this area, the harvest quota will be set at 10 for the season.

Quotas are set on registered lines by aerial surveys. The number of beaver colonies are counted and marked on maps. Some traplines in Ontario have over 300 active beaver colonies. The trapper is obligated to harvest 75% of his beaver quota. If they fail to do so, loss of the trapline could occur. If the quota is over harvested, charges and loss of trapline occur automatically upon conviction.

Before any pelt can be received at the auction facility, the trapper must have them sealed by MNR personnel. This is just one of the checks and balances in place to ensure the resource is properly managed and controlled. In order for the trapper to get the pelt sealed, he must supply the game warden with a current trapping licence. The officer records the number of pelts and species harvested and checks it against the trapper's quota on the licence. The harvest records are duplicated - in



This fur harvester is trapping beaver pelts under ice conditions.

continued on page 9