



# New Jersey Furbearer Management Newsletter

Fall 2011



New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Upland Wildlife and Furbearer Project



## Deadlines and Dates to Remember

### Beaver and Otter Deadlines

Application Period: October 1-31

Award Notification: by November 14

### Beaver and Otter Trapping Season Dates

Dec. 26 – Feb. 9 (Jan. 1 – Feb. 9 on some WMA)\*  
*\*under "Trapping Regulations- 2011 NJ Fish and Wildlife Digest"*

Mandatory Pelt Registration: February 25, 2012

### Please remember:

- **Successful applicants must claim their permit after November 14 and prior to 11:59 PM on Monday, December 5. Unclaimed permits will be posted on the Division's website by December 9.**
- **Unclaimed permits will be returned to the quota and made available for over-the-counter sale at participating license agents or online beginning at 10 AM on Monday, December 12.**

## Applying for a Beaver and/or Otter Permit –

Apply in person by visiting any participating license agent, or go online at [www.nj.wildlifelicence.com](http://www.nj.wildlifelicence.com) to log in to the Division's license sales website. You will be prompted to enter the necessary information. The website accepts most major credit cards and electronic checks as payment, using proven security technologies to ensure that your transaction is secure.

A non-refundable \$2.00 application fee will be charged for each permit you apply for. You must pay the remainder of the fee (\$15.00 for beaver and \$2.00 for otter) when claiming your permit(s). Unsuccessful applicants no longer need to wait for a refund since the only payment made was the non-refundable \$2.00 application fee. If paying via the Internet, applicants will receive their permits by mail (additional shipping charges apply).

**Permits awarded via the lottery system may be claimed at participating license agents. Leftover and unclaimed permits returned to the quota will be made available for over-the-counter sale at license agents or online beginning December 12.**

## What Makes a Pelt “Prime”?

The fur industry definition of *primeness* includes many terms familiar only to a professional fur grader but to many of us, primeness is simply the condition of the fur at the coldest and driest time of the year. A more complete laymen’s definition of primeness, is the chronological period when “the fur has reached its maximum length, density and finest texture; when the hairs have matured with seemingly no pigment being produced, and as a consequence, the flesh surface of the pelt appears devoid of hair root pigmentation.”. Depending on the end use of the pelt, primeness could refer to either side of the pelt.

Prime winter fur is attained when the guard hairs and underfur have just reached the *telogen* phase of the hair cycle. The *telogen* phase or stage can be defined as the “resting stage” of the hair growth cycle and is attained when all growth ceases and the fully grown hair is anchored deep within the skin. The increased density of a mink’s winter pelage is primarily the result of a greater number of hairs, especially of the underfur. For example, the number of hairs in the summer pelage of mink is approximately 12–14 per follicle, whereas the winter fur attains 17–20 per follicle. The skin and the leather side of prime pelts should appear creamy white. The creamy white color occurs when the hair follicles enter this resting stage.

Even though most of the hair length is attained during the *anagen* or active growth stage, fur in the *anagen* stage is not yet in prime condition. During this stage hair follicles are still situated deep within the skin and active growth causes the leather and skin to appear dark. Pelts from animals in the growth stage are referred to as “blue pelts”. If “blue pelts” are sanded or shaved or otherwise processed to reduce their thickness and weight, many of the deeper hair roots will be cut off. This causes hair to fall out. The growth of underfur of mink was found to lag behind development of guard hairs by approximately 2 weeks. This indicates that guard hairs develop first, followed later by underfur.

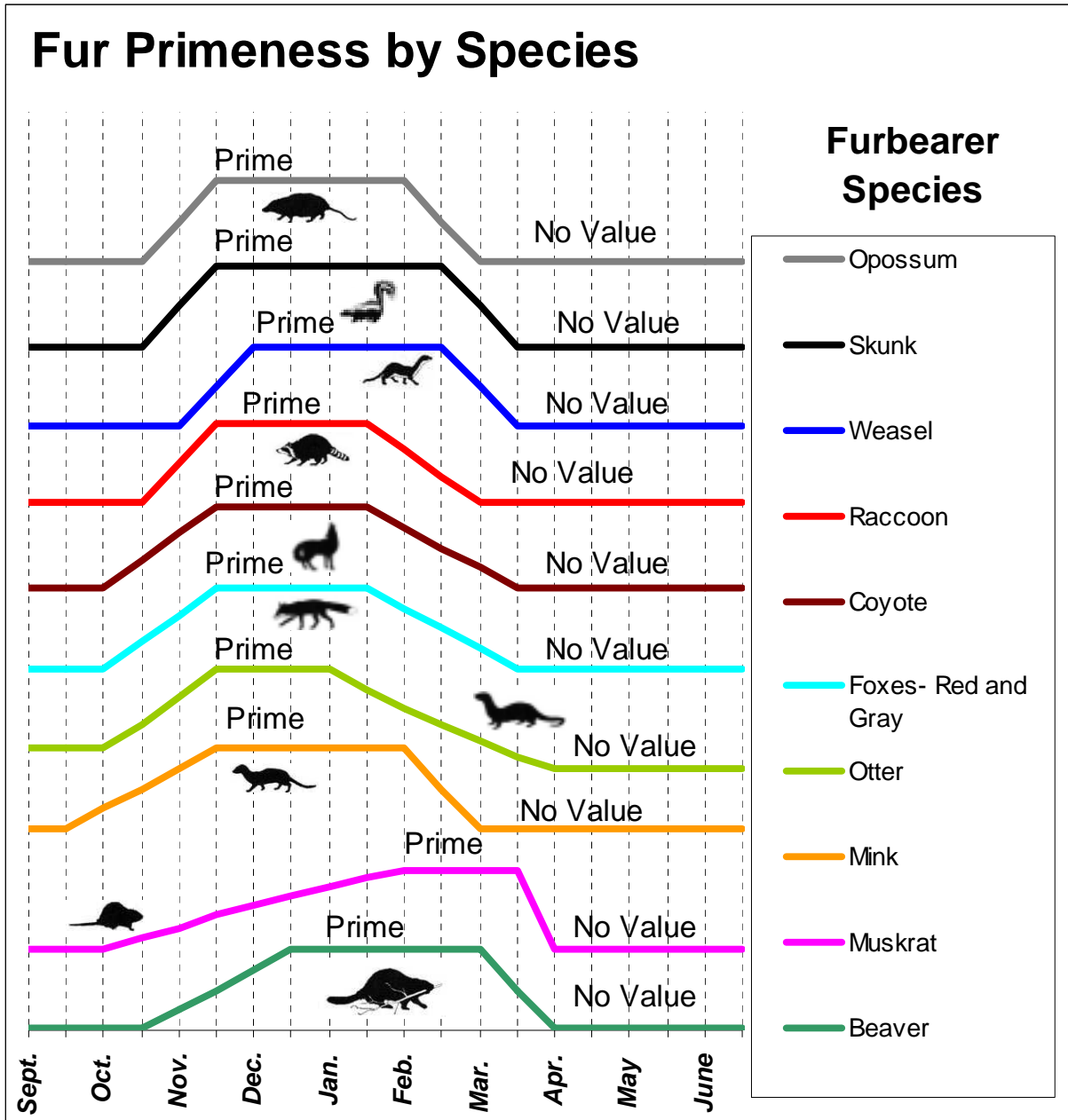
Primeness is not the only way to determine a pelt’s value. Peak fur color is often attained during the growth stage shortly before the pelt is considered to be in prime condition. So, it is very possible that in some instances slightly unprime pelts can command higher prices than prime pelts. Fur begins to lose much of its luster through natural fading of pigments and becomes subject to damage from sunlight if the animal is not caught and the pelt removed soon after the fur becomes prime. This especially applies to mink fur that turns off-color within a few weeks of becoming prime. The tips of the guard hairs of some species begin to curl, resulting in a “singled” pelage; this is common in mink and river otter pelts. Animals may also damage their own fur through a variety of chewing and rubbing actions. A “rubbed” pelt is one that has large patches of fur missing, often from the shoulders, flanks, or hips. Many trappers are familiar with these areas of rubbed fur on the pelts of foxes or coyotes, which is often more common and visible by the mid to late winter breeding season.

*A graphic, following on page 3, illustrates the general chronological timing for pelt primeness by species.*



***Please report any fisher or bobcat captures!***  
***Call: 877-WARNDEP (877-927-6337)***





***Please Remember to Report Your Coyotes!***

*Coyotes harvested by any method must be reported to a New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife Regional Law Enforcement office within 24 hours.*

**Regional NJ Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Office phone numbers:**

- Northern Region Office 908-735-8240
- Central Region Office 609-259-2120
- Southern Region Office 856-629-0555

## New Jersey Furbearer Facts:

### The Weasel Family (Mustelidae)



The weasel family, *Mustelidae*, is the largest family of furbearers in New Jersey. Named for the two anal glands, members of this group of mammals can forcefully project or exude an odorous, oily substance (or musk) as a territorial marker or defensive response. River otter (*Lontra canadensis*), mink (*Mustela vison*), long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*), short-tailed weasel (*Mustela erminea*) and the fisher (*Martes pennanti*) are members of this large family of furbearers.

Due to their nocturnal habits and their generally elusive nature, most mustelids are rarely seen. As a family, mustelids are widely distributed and fulfill extremely important roles in local ecosystems. All members of the mustelid family except the river otter play important roles in keeping the numbers of rodents and other small mammals in check. Also, mink and river otter are water quality indicators.

All members of this family are predators and feed almost exclusively on animal matter - almost always from prey freshly caught.



In addition to their ecological value, mustelids are also a valuable renewable economic resource for New Jersey's trappers. Of the six species of mustelids that currently occur in New Jersey, all can be legally trapped except fisher, which is presently rare. As a rule, the fur of mustelid species is generally some of the earliest to prime each fall/winter.

*The mustelids vary considerably in size and weight between various species. Mustelids display notable sexual dimorphism; males are noticeably larger than females of the same species.*

- The short-tailed weasel males weigh 2.5 to 7.3 ounces and reach a total length of 7–13 inches, whereas females weigh 1 to 3 ounces and are 7.5–11 inches in length. Also known as ermine, the short-tailed weasel molts to white during winter, except for the black tip on its tail. In summer, the fur is reddish brown above and white below, with white fur extending down the inner side of the hindleg. The short-tailed weasel is uncommon in New Jersey.
- Long-tailed weasels range from 11-17 inches, and weigh 5-16 ounces. Again, males tend to be significantly larger than females. Weights and lengths at the low end of the scale generally are females and the heavier and larger end is for males. Overall pelt coloration is brown with a yellowish-white neck and belly. In northern New Jersey long-tailed weasel molt in the fall and their pelage might become totally white and remain that color until they molt again to brown in the spring. In areas of New Jersey and farther south the long-tailed weasel might remain brown throughout the year. The long-tailed weasel is fairly common in New Jersey.
- Mink sizes range from approximately 18-28 inches in length and 1.5 – 4.5 lbs. A mink's fur is short and glossy and may vary from light brown to almost black but is generally a dark chocolate brown. They also usually possess a white chin but this fieldmark may vary in size from individual to individual. Mink are semi-aquatic and utilize all types of quality



wetlands. The mink is abundant throughout New Jersey.

- Fishers range in size from 29-48 in., and weigh 4-13 lbs. with some large males approaching 20 lbs. Fisher pelts can range from dark reddish brown to a grizzled black. This grizzled appearance results from tri-colored guard hairs and the tendency toward a grizzled pelage tends to be a male trait. Unlike most members of the weasel family, fishers (and martens) are excellent climbers. This climbing ability makes the fisher a serious threat to porcupines. Although historically present in New Jersey during colonial days, the fisher, as a species, was extirpated by mid to late 1800s. As a result of re-introductions in both Pennsylvania and New York states, fishers have returned to New Jersey, but are presently considered rare.
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- The river otter is the largest mustelid in New Jersey with a total length that may vary from 35 to 55 inches and weights that range from 12 and up to 30 lbs. The pelt colors for the river otter may include various shades of brown. The pelt is made up of short, dense and glossy fur. River otter are semi-aquatic and utilize most healthy wetland systems ranging from upland trout streams to coastal tidal marshes. The otter is common in New Jersey.
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**Note:** Historic records indicate that martens did occur in New Jersey, but the species was probably extirpated from the state by the early portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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**The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is a professional, environmental agency dedicated to the protection, management and wise use of the state's fish and wildlife resources.**