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BEAVER FARMING PROMISING
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Beavers are of importance as fur-bearers and conservators of water and soil. Their unique habits make them animals of general interest. In certain types of forest country, or farms, in irrigation ditches, and along trails, roads, and railroads, they are capable of doing serious damage. It becomes necessary in such cases to remove them or to control them intelligently.

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Their control, however, is not difficult. United States Department of Agriculture Bulletin 1078, Beaver Habits, Beaver Control, and Possibilities in Beaver Farming, by Vernon Bailey, of the Bureau of Biological Survey, discusses in detail the kinds of traps, fences, and other control measures which have proved satisfactory. The bulletin also points out that beaver farming may prove a successful branch of fur farming if carried on in suitable localities. Beavers in our national forests if properly controlled would conserve water and soil, weed out timber of little value, and yield good returns in fur. In connection with projects for reforestation with conifers on well located burned and cut-over timber-lands, beaver culture might prove profitable. These lands are frequently covered with a second growth of aspen, willow, and pin cherry, which are ideal food for beavers, while having little commercial value.

Aspens and willows are abundant also in the certain northern areas of Canada and Alaska, where beavers were formerly very numerous. In such areas experiments might be made to determine the practical possibilities in beaver farming.

Note for Editors: The continuation of the story may be added to the above by those publications desiring further details.

Only two centuries ago beavers inhabited the greater part of the North American Continent and were an important source of food and warm clothing to the native people. Traffic in their skins promoted early settlement of the country. They have been exterminated over much of their area by intensive trapping, but for the last 20 years they have been given special protection in

many sections of the country and under favorable conditions have thrived and increased rapidly.

While it would be obviously unwise to restore the animals to cultivated fields and orchards in agricultural areas, there are still many localities where they could be introduced without harm. By storing water in the reservoirs along mountain streams they would help prevent floods and extensive erosion and would increase stream flow in dry weather.

Beavers with the darkest, most beautiful, and most valuable fur are found along the southern shore of Lake Superior, in Wisconsin and Michigan. In other localities the fur is paler and less desirable. In making suggestions relative to raising beaver for fur, the importance of using the best types of animals for breeding stock is emphasized.

Department Bulletin 1078 describes in considerable detail the interesting life and habits of beavers, which rarely dig on the surface of the ground and never make a burrow with an exposed entrance. In carrying materials they use their strong incisor teeth for transporting logs or large pieces of wood, and for mud and small sticks and twigs from the bottom of the pond to be placed on the dam or house, they use their forelegs as hands and arms. The flat heavy tail is a rudder or propeller in the water and a prop or brace on land.

Beavers occasionally damage choice trees but the most serious damage is occasioned by their dams, which raise the water levels in streams, ponds, or lakes, flooding low ground and frequently killing great areas of valuable forest trees. When railroad grades are flooded in low ground the result may be serious. A suggestion is made in the bulletin for using an outlet pipe to keep beaver ponds at a desired level as one means of preventing heavy damage. One of the simplest and most important means of beaver control is fencing. Many of the woven-wire stock-fences are satisfactory. Full directions for trapping with various types of traps are given in the bulletin. Light-furred pelts bring from \$6 to \$8 each, heavy dark-brown skins from Canada and Alaska bring from \$20 to \$25 each, and the rare "black beavers" from the south shore of Lake Superior from \$38 to \$50.