



North West Territory officers examine pelt.

and squirrel) account for about three-quarters of all wild furs taken in Canada. Some species (red fox, coyote and raccoon) are probably *more* abundant in Canada than they have ever been.

Regulated trapping often allows the maintenance of larger wildlife populations than would naturally occur.

Muskrat and beaver for example, can rapidly overpopulate, until suitable vegetation is exhausted. Starvation, cannibalism and hemorrhagic diseases like tuleremia then take their toll. By then, however, the ravaged habitat may support few, if any, muskrat or beaver for ten years or more.

Many other species which thrive around an active beaver pond would also be lost.

By contrast, regulated trapping combined with habitat management can maintain stable, healthy beaver and muskrat populations indefinitely, while providing income for local people in regions where alternative employment is very limited.

Ontario accounts for over one-quarter of Canadian wild fur production. Trappers there earned about \$4 million from the sale of beaver pelts, during the winter of 1987-88. A large proportion of these animals also provided meat, for humans or pets. The rest were returned to the woods as bait or to feed wildlife.

About 150 000 beaver are taken annually in Ontario, from a total estimated provincial population of about two million. Beaver are

believed to be more numerous in Ontario than they have ever been (*Status Report on Beaver in Canada*, Environment Canada, 1985).

In all, some 80 000 Canadian trappers earned close to \$65 million for their furs in the winter of 1987-88.

Control required

Humane societies euthanise unwanted urban pet populations, rather than leave them to die of starvation and disease. Nor would anyone advocate allowing rats or cockroaches to multiply in our cities, until nature 'took its course'. Yet, few urban people realise that similar problems can arise with wildlife.

Overpopulated coyote, foxes and other fur-bearers are more susceptible to cruel diseases like distemper, encephalitis, hepatitis, sarcoptic mange and rabies, which can spread to domestic animals or humans.

Uncontrolled, beavers can cause flooded roads and farmland. Raccoons cause extensive crop damage, destroying more standing corn than they eat. (Raccoons also account for a high proportion of nuisance-animal problems in Canadian cities.) Coyotes and bobcat attack livestock, while mink and marten have a taste for domestic poultry.

Without the commercial incentive provided by the fur trade, wildlife populations would still have to be controlled at the tax-payers' expense.