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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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VAGARIES OF WOMEN'S FASHIONS BRING WOES TO COUNTRY'S FARMERS

The vagaries of American women's fashions are making their influence felt in the country's farm lands, Frank G. Ashbrook, of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Branch of Wildlife Research, relates.

Diminishing demand for long-haired fur garments, particularly raccoon, has caused the raccoon population to increase to record proportions. As a result, Mr. Ashbrook explains, these animals have become a serious nuisance.

Farmers throughout the country complain that these small fur-bearing animals are feeding on garden crops, laying waste to truck-farm crops, and devastating corn fields.

Because of the current insignificance of raccoon fur in the fashion field, prices paid for skins have remained extremely low for the past few seasons. Mr. Ashbrook says that raccoon garments are unpopular with American women because the fur is too bulky-looking, and therefore not conducive to the "New Look."

Trappers have made no effort to take raccoons because the furs do not bring a sufficient return for the work expended.

Mr. Ashbrook says that enormous quantities of raccoon skins are now stored, and that stocks are increasing in the raw fur receiving houses and cold storage plants of the country's fur centers. It is impossible to move them because of the low demand.

As chief of the Section of Wild Fur Animal Investigations, Mr. Ashbrook is trying to develop new uses for raccoon skins. By developing a new market for 'coon skins, he believes that it will be possible to control the damage caused by raccoons on farm property.

He says that raccoon skins will possibly be used in the glove manufacturing industry. But he fears that the skins may be too small for profitable glove manufacture and that the dehairing of the skins may present a problem to manufacturers.

Sample raccoon skins have been shipped to the Department of Agriculture leather laboratories in Philadelphia and to factories in Gloversville, N. Y. Research work on the skins is currently being conducted at these places, Mr. Ashbrook discloses.

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