Forest fires frequently wipe out wild-fur production for some time over large areas. Provincial forest services combat this menace by well-organized fire-fighting systems, including the use of aircraft and parachute-dropped fire-fighters and equipment, and by public education. Beaver dams also help to level off the effects of floods and drought, natural catastrophes that seriously affect fur-bearers and other wildlife. Beavers are, in fact, so useful as assistants to wildlife-management services that numbers of them are often transplanted, by air or otherwise, from areas where they are too numerous to areas where their activities will improve habitat for themselves and for other species.

The most important aspects of management of the fur-trapping industry are: constant practical scientific research, maintenance of suitable habitat and its improvement where possible, sound and balanced regulation of the harvest of fur-bearers, provision of competent and adequate field staffs, and true education of trappers with respect to the principles of wildlife management. By these means many areas depleted of fur-bearers have once again become productive. Such means will become increasingly important in maintaining Canada's position as a major producer of raw furs.

Subsection 2.—Fur Farming

Although early developments in raising fur-bearing animals on farms took place first in Prince Edward Island around 1887 and in Quebec in 1898, fur farming to-day is carried on in all the provinces of Canada. Foxes were the first fur bearers to be raised in captivity on a commercial scale but mink, chinchilla, raccoon, marten, fisher, fitch, nutria and many others are now being reared. Mink are the most numerous, followed by the various types of foxes and these two far outnumber all other kinds of fur-bearing animals.

There was a slow and steady increase in the number of fur-farms until 1920, when 587 were reported, with a period of more rapid growth from 1920 to 1938 when the number had reached 10,435. After the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 and the loss of the London and European markets, prices declined and many fur farms went out of production. Though prices rose considerably after the War, operating costs also increased and the number of fur farms, particularly those conducted in conjunction with other farming operations, continued to decrease. By 1950 only 3,492 reported but, despite this decrease in number, volume of production has gradually increased over the period.

While the earliest and most intensive fur-farming operations were concerned with fox-raising in the Maritime Provinces and Quebec, the sharp decline in the popularity of fox furs and the steady rise in mink resulted in Ontario and Western Canada taking predominant positions in the raising of fur animals. A distribution of the 317,000 animals on fur farms at Dec. 31, 1950, showed 11 p.c. in British Columbia, 47 p.c. in the Prairie Provinces, 25 p.c. in Ontario, 11 p.c. in Quebec and 6 p.c. in the Maritime Provinces.

Furs have for centuries been used for clothing and adornment and, with the demands of fashion, the development of new colour phases in fox and mink has been an important incentive to the fur-farming industry. There have always been mink mutations in the wild state but these unusual animals stood little chance of survival and such pelts were exceedingly rare. Only by breeding under protection could these strange animals be increased in number and variety. Starting with wild-caught mink, breeders have, by cross-breeding, produced mink furs in a