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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, September 9, 1936.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FUR AND FUR TRIMMED GARMENTS." Information from the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture.

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How many of my listeners are planning to buy a fur-trimmed or all fur coat this fall? I've already told you about the new leaflet, "Quality Guides in Buying Women's Cloth Coats," prepared by the Bureau of Home Economics, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, so if you have sent for your copy of the leaflet you know the principal points to check on as far as fabric and making are concerned. But when it comes to judging the fur on a coat, or an entire fur coat, most of us feel as if we know very little. The "coat leaflet" will give you some good suggestions, but since I've talked with Frank G. Ashbrook of the Biological Survey, I can supplement them with some others. Mr. Ashbrook is in charge of the section of fur resources in that bureau.

"First, let's take the fur-trimmed coats," said Mr. Ashbrook. "Above a certain price level, manufacturers say you get practically the same quality material and workmanship in coats. The difference in cost will depend on the kind, quality, and amount of fur trim.

"That, again, will depend on the kind of a coat you want. For everyday wear, in all kinds of weather, you need a durable as well as a decorative fur trim. Beaver, raccoon, karakul, skunk, and various others are good kinds on a sport or street coat. Some furs are more 'youthful' looking than others, perhaps. The manufacturers suit furs pretty well to the cut and size of the coat, so you needn't worry much about that.

"For a dressy coat, to wear to church or afternoon receptions, Persian lamb, squirrel, mink, broadtail and Alaska seal are flattering and suitable fur trimmings. Some of them are less durable than others. When you are looking at any fur-trimmed coat, try to find a tag which tells the kind of fur and some facts about its wearing qualities. There are many natural furs, and countless imitations. Imitations are not necessarily bad bargains. Many of them are very good. You simply want to know what you are getting. The Federal Trade Commission and the fur industry have agreed on a consumer-protecting rule of advertising which requires that the correct name of a fur be the last name of the description. For instance, 'seal-dyed-muskrat' means that the fur is really muskrat that has been dyed to look like seal.

"Any of the processes used for the purpose of improving the colors, such as dyeing, pointing, tipping, shading, and blending shall be mentioned, and the fur described, as 'pointed fox' or 'tipped skunk'. These rulings apply only to printed statements, but as very few descriptive tags are used on coats, you are compelled to depend on the word of your dealer.



"Another point about coats with fur trimming: Is the style of the collar practical as well as becoming? Extremely high rolling collars will disturb your hair and rub against your hat brim. Many manufacturers this year are showing smaller fur collars and scarf-like neck finished for this very reason. Again, the fur on pointed corners of collars and cuffs will soon show wear, and so will trimming pieces that come in contact with a belt or fastenings. If there is fur trimming on the sleeve it is best placed where it will be spared undue rubbing against the coat. Any fur cuff will show wear in time, and need repair. Fur buttons, too, must occasionally be renewed. Carrying a purse under your arm may rub against fur sleeve trimming.

"When it comes to buying an all-fur coat, the customer is more than ever dependent on the word of a reliable dealer, because in every class of fur there are good peltries and poor ones. The cheapest fur coats on the market are likely to be made of the poorest grades of fur, no matter what kind it is. A reputable dealer will explain the difference in wearing quality of each fur, and advise you on the best one for your purpose. Always try on a fur coat carefully to see that it is roomy enough across the shoulders and in the armholes, also when you sit."

"What is the difference between Alaska seal, Hudson seal, and French seal?" I asked. "The first," said Mr. Ashbrook, "is the real fur seal, such as your grandmother probably had in her seal coat. For a while there was uncontrolled slaughter of Alaska seal. Then the government stepped in and protected the seals so that now only a limited number may be killed for their fur each year. The skins are generally dyed brown or black. This season's popular color is safari brown. Alaska seal is beautiful and durable, but necessarily somewhat costly.

" 'Hudson seal' is sheared muskrat, from which the guard hairs have been plucked, then the pelts have been dyed to resemble true sealskin. It is very durable and attractive, and because muskrats are so plentiful, the price is often moderate. 'French seal' is one of the 70 or more names given to rabbit fur. 'Sealine', 'lapin', and 'coney' are others. Rabbit fur is fine, abundant, and strong, and it can be treated to represent almost every fur. If you know from the tag or the dealer what you are getting, rabbit may be a good fur buy. White evening jackets and wraps made of rabbit are usually very satisfactory, because they look pretty and do not get hard wear."

"What else can you tell us about furs, Mr. Ashbrook?"

"Well, beaver is now handled in a new way to make the skin softer and more flexible, so that it feels thinner and lighter and can be draped to suit the fashion for fullness in fur coats."

"What about styles in fur coats this year?"

Mr. Ashbrook said styles are decided largely by stylists in the fur industry. "I hear swagger coats and tunics and fitted waistlines and fur evening capes, even fur suits may be popular this season," he said. "Fur hats are now being made, you know, to match the fur or fur trim of a coat, and muffs have been back several years

"I suppose you know that many of the raw furs are now sent out of the far north by airplane and boats instead of by dog sleds. That means that they reach the market much sooner in the season, so the stylists get their work in earlier than they used to."

I wanted to tell you what Mr. Ashbrook said about the proper care of fur garments, but time's up. I'll save that for another day.

