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ANNALES  
UNIVERSITATIS MARIAE CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA  
LUBLIN – POLONIA

VOL. XXX (4)

SECTIO EE

2012

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**Analysis of sales results of polish mink furs  
at auction houses: Finnish Fur Sales, North American  
Fur Auctions and Kopenhagen Fur in the seasons  
2006/2007–2008/2009**

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Analiza wyników sprzedaży polskich skór norek w domach aukcyjnych: Finnish  
Fur Sales, North American Fur Auctions i Kopenhagen Fur w sezonach  
2006/2007–2008/2009

**Summary.** The purpose of the research was to analyse sales results of domestic mink furs at the following auction houses: Kopenhagen Fur, Finnish Fur Sales and North American Fur Auctions. The animals were raised on two breeding farms during three auction seasons: 2006/2007, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. Sales of particular colour varieties were influenced by season, auction house and farm. The most profitable male furs were mahogany, black cross, brown cross, black in the season 2006/2007, black, scanblack, silverblue, brown cross and black cross in the season 2007/2008 and pastel and black in the season 2008/2009. The average price paid for a particular colour type was influenced by auction house. Interestingly, furs offered most frequently by Polish breeders were not always popular with buyers at auctions. In the study period, the disparity between the average prices of Polish and international furs was observed.

**Key words:** mink, fur, price, auction, auction house

INTRODUCTION

Fur farming in Europe is latitude-related and is concentrated mainly in Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands and Poland. Approximately 47.7% of European mink fur production is in Denmark [www.efba.eu]. The international trading system of pelts is based on auction houses which are located in countries producing the greatest numbers of skins (Finland, Denmark, Canada, the USA, Russia) [Wierzbicki 2005]. Mink farming has become increasingly popular in Poland over recent years [Socha and Markiewicz

2003]. Polish production of mink skins amounted to 8.5% of the world's production in 2010 and was ranked fourth [www.furcommission.com].

Dynamics of pelt production from fur-bearing animals is to a large extent influenced by fashion trends which dictate skins of which species, or colour types in the case of mink, are coming into vogue. This, in turn, results in fluctuations of economic cycle reflected in increasing or declining demand. Such a phenomenon has been noticed in mink fur production since the very beginning of mink farming. There seems to be a permanent and continuous demand for longer skins whereas colour preferences are very variable [Lorek and Gugolek 1997].

The price is an outcome of size, colour, shade, fur purity, quality type, colour type of a given sex and potential defects. However, prices tend to vary a lot depending on the year or even auction. Skins, like any other products, have prices which fluctuate seasonally [Jakubczak and Jeżewska 2003].

The objective of the work was to analyse sales of Polish mink skins at three auction houses in the years 2006–2009. The results of the study are hoped to be of use to the present mink farmers as well as those who would like to start raising and breeding minks in the future.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two breeding farms located in northern Poland were studied (farm A and farm B). Farm A breeds the following colour varieties of mink (also referred to as a colour type): scanblack, mahogany, scanbrown, scanglow, pastel, sapphire, silverblue, black cross, brown cross, aleution, pearl, palomino, black and demi. On farm B, the colour types raised are: black, brown, glow, mahogany, pearl beige, black cross, pastel cross, pastel, brown cross, palomino, dawn, silverblue, silverblue cross, palomino cross, sprinklers, demi and pearl cross. Furs sold were described according to the season (2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2008/2009) and auction house. The numbers of furs sold and analysed in the study seasons were 29,992 and 9,784 on farm A and B, respectively. Results of fur sales were derived from reports of three auction houses: Kopenhagen Fur – KF (Copenhagen), Finnish Fur Sales – FFS (Helsinki) and North American Fur Auctions – NAFA (Toronto).

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mink fur sales results of two farms (A and B) at three auction houses were analysed in the work. Table 1 and 2 demonstrate numbers of farm A and B mink furs sold by season and auction house.

The furs sold were characterised depending on the season and auction house. Breeding work relies on determination of effects of various parameters on the final average fur price which appears to be very important when one wants to examine mink breeding profitability [Kubacki *et al.* 2008].

Table 1. Number of mink's furs sold from farm A, depending on the auction house and the season

Tabela 1. Liczba sprzedanych skór norek pochodzących z fermy A w zależności od domu aukcyjnego i sezonu

The number of fur-skins sold Liczba sprzedanych skór	Season – Sezon		
	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
<i>NAFA</i>	–	952	–
<i>FFS</i>	4026	12856	12158
Total – Suma	4026	13808	12158

Table 2. Number of mink's furs sold from farm B, depending on the auction house and the season

Tabela 2. Liczba sprzedanych skór norek pochodzących z fermy B w zależności od domu aukcyjnego i sezonu

Liczba sprzedanych skór The number of fur-skins sold	Sezon – Season		
	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
<i>NAFA</i>	–	962	4415
<i>KF</i>	2661	1746	–
Total – Suma	2661	2708	4415

Individual fur sale seasons should be examined and analysed in relation to the world's economic situation, climate and fashion trends. The season 2006/2007 was marked by nervous atmosphere on the fur market due to the very mild winter in the northern hemisphere [Scheepens 2007]. The hot autumn was followed by winter later than usual, which postponed the beginning of the retail season. What is more, there was less than usual demand for long skins as fashionable light clothes were more popular than traditional products. Additionally, the season was different from the previous ones from the perspective of the international fur trade. The season 2007/2008 was quite special because of instability of the world economy, financial crisis and the news about bankruptcies in the USA that preceded the September auction, which influenced purchasing decisions of buyers. The enormous US market suffered from signs of depression [www.skinpolex.com.pl]. The third season, 2008//2009, which was also dominated by the economic crisis, saw dropping skin prices. The fur business was affected by the crisis, particularly because of no demand in Russia whose fur consumer market had been the greatest for many years [Scheepens 2009].

Farm A owners sold mink furs at the FFS and NAFA auction houses. When the three seasons at FFS are considered (tab. 3), the highest average price was paid for scanblack male furs in 2007/2008 and the lowest for silverblue female skins in 2008/2009. In the first season, the highest average price, 33.00 EUR, was paid for brown cross and brown cross male skins and the lowest for brown cross and sapphire female furs, only 14.00 EUR, on average. The season 2007/2008 was marked by high mink fur prices. Scanblack male furs were the most expensive – 41.00 EUR, on average, whereas pastel and black cross female furs were the cheapest – 17.00 EUR, on average.

Table 3. Mean prices for particular colour varieties of mink's furs (EUR) according to sex (♂ – males, ♀ – females) and season, sold in FFS auction house (farm A)

Tabela 3. Średnie ceny poszczególnych odmian barwnych skór norek (EUR), w zależności od płci (♂ – samce, ♀ – samice) i sezonu, sprzedanych w domu aukcyjnym FFS (ferma A)

Colour variety Odmiana barwna	2006/2007		2007/2008		2008/2009	
	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀
Scanblack	26.00	19.00	41.00	20.00	23.92	20.68
Mahogany	28.00	16.00	36.00	18.00	24.00	19.62
Scanbrown	28.00	17.00	36.50	20.00	23.91	21.00
Scanglow	30.00	16.00	36.50	19.50	27.25	18.05
Pastel	26.00	16.00	35.00	17.00	27.13	14.25
Sapphire	23.00	14.00	38.00	21.00	20.20	12.31
Silverblue	32.00	18.00	40.00	22.50	21.31	10.31
White	24.00	15.00	34.00	18.00	20.67	16.22
Black cross	33.00	15.00	32.00	17.00	–	–
Brown cross	33.00	14.00	31.00	21.00	–	–
Aleution	–	–	–	–	17.22	10.46
Pearl	–	–	–	–	21.87	15.22
Palomino	–	–	–	–	–	14.00
Other Pozostałe (różne)	21.00	11.00	33.00	18.00	–	8.50
Średnia cena za skórę The mean price	27.00	16.00	35.70	19.30	22.75	15.05

– the breeder didn't exhibited mink's fur on that auction

– hodowca nie wystawiał skór na tej aukcji

The next season, 2008/2009, saw the lowest prices, 10.31 EUR on average, paid for silverblue female furs and the highest prices, 27.13 EUR on average, for pastel male skins. Mink breeders were offered the most profitable prices in the season 2007/2008 when they averaged 35.70 EUR and 19.30 EUR for males and females, respectively. In contrast, the least profitable season was definitely 2008/2009 when the respective prices paid for males and females averaged 22.75 and 15.05 EUR.

Analysis of the whole study periods revealed that farm A owners sold the greatest number of scanbrown furs (fig. 1). The same trend was also observed in each season. The lowest percentage of pastel furs was sold and it remained at a low level of less than 0.3% at all the auctions over the whole study period. It was also noticed that more and more silverblue mink furs were sold each year, the difference between 2006/2007 and 2008/2009 being over 16%. By contrast, sales of scanglow furs dropped by over 5%. Such an unstable situation resulted from market demand for a given fur type at a given time period, which in turn is fashion-related.

Farm A owners put their furs up for auction at the NAFA auction house in the season 2007/2008 only (tab. 4). The highest average prices were paid for black male furs, 45.30 EUR, and the lowest for demi furs, 15.22 EUR. The average-sized male and female furs were priced in this season at 28.13 and 14.45 EUR, respectively. The difference between average prices paid for male and female furs was 13.68 EUR. The NAFA auction house offered and sold the largest number of demi furs, over 50%. Sapphire mink furs were in quite a strong position whereas sales of black cross skins were the lowest and amounted to 0.1% (fig. 2).

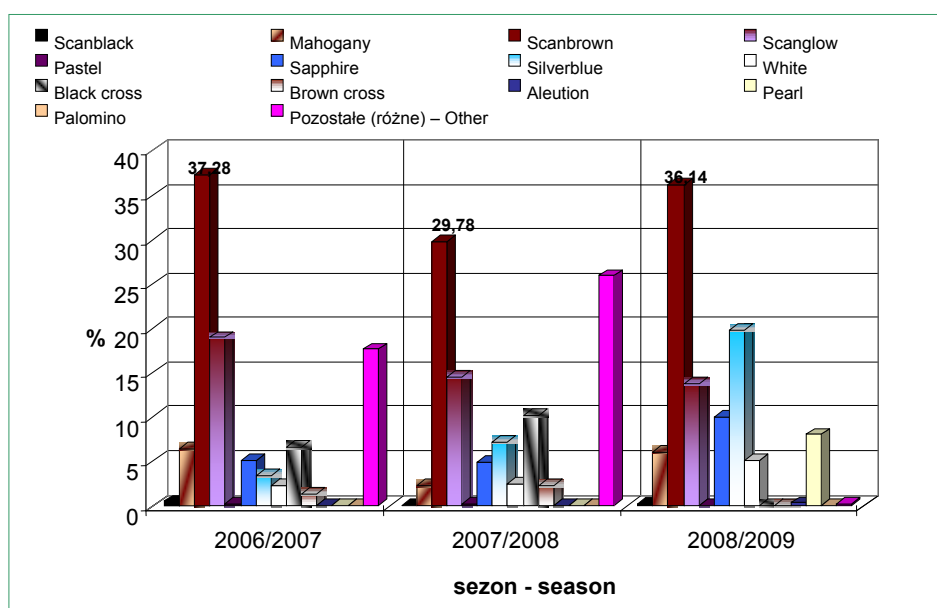


Fig. 1. The structure of distribution of colour varieties of mink's furs sold in FFS auction house according to auction season (farm A)

Rys. 1. Struktura rozkładu odmian barwnych skór norek sprzedanych w domu aukcyjnym FFS w zależności od sezonu aukcyjnego (ferma A)

Table 4. Mean prices for particular colour varieties of mink's furs (EUR) according to sex (♂ – males, ♀ – females) and season, sold in NAFA auction house (farm A)  
Tabela 4. Średnie ceny poszczególnych odmian barwnych skór norek (EUR), w zależności od płci (♂ – amce, ♀ – samice), sprzedanych w domu aukcyjnym NAFA (ferma A)

Colour variety Odmiana barwna	2007/2008	
	♂	♀
Mahogany	28.80	15.24
Sapphire	28.86	16.19
Silverblue	22.86	–*
White	29.09	15.27
Black cross	23.50	–
Pearl	25.57	15.88
Black	45.30	–
Demi	28.77	15.22
Other – Pozostałe (różne)	13.34	8.81
The mean price – Średnia cena za skórę	28.13	14.45

– the breeder didn't exhibited mink's fur on that auction  
– hodowca nie wystawiał skór na tej aukcji

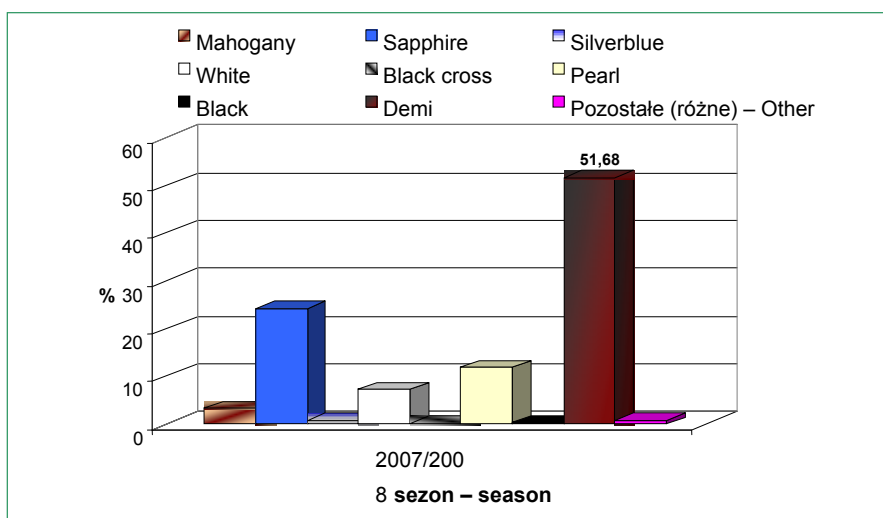


Fig. 2. The structure of distribution of colour varieties of mink's furs sold in NAFA auction house (farm A)

Rys. 2. Struktura rozkładu odmian barwnych skór norek sprzedanych w domu aukcyjnym NAFA (ferma A)

Table 5. Mean prices for particular colour varieties of mink's furs (EUR) according to sex (♂ – males, ♀ – females) and season, sold in KF auction house (farm B)

Tabela 5. Średnie ceny poszczególnych odmian barwnych skór norek (EUR), w zależności od płci (♂ – samce, ♀ – samice) i sezonu, sprzedanych w domu aukcyjnym KF (ferma B)

Odmiana barwna Colour variety	2006/2007		2007/2008	
	♂	♀	♂	♀
Black	32.45	21.09	–	–
Brown	5.01	11.85	–	–
Glow	9.48	8.74	–	–
Mahogany	36.15	18.68	–	14.92
Topaz	19.97	8.20	–	–
Pearl beige	26.78	10.71	–	–
Black cross	27.41	12.73	31.15	19.60
Pastel cross	24.21	13.30	27.71	14.80
Pastel	13.39	–	–	–
Brown cross	30.30	12.30	33.60	18.67
Palomino	6.57	7.85	–	14.80
Dawn	20.10	–	–	–
Silverblue	–*	–	32.65	–
Silverblue cross	–	–	–	23.94
Palomino cross	–	–	21.28	–
Średnia cena za skórę The mean price	22.89	13.77	29.78	17.79

– the breeder didn't exhibited mink's fur on that auction  
– hodowca nie wystawiał skór na tej aukcji

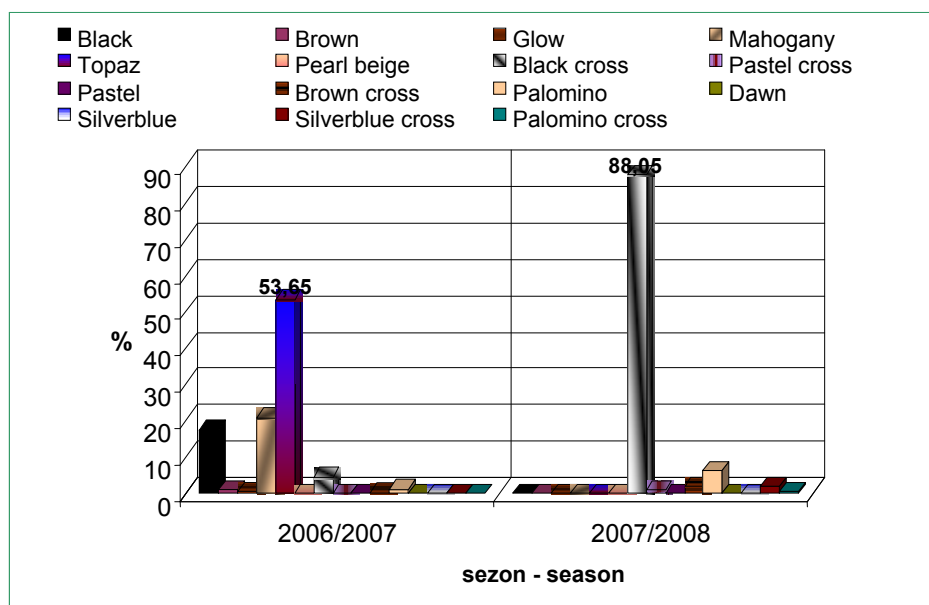


Fig. 3. The structure of distribution of colour varieties of mink's furs sold in KF auction house according to auction season (farm B)

Rys. 3. Struktura rozkładu odmian barwnych skór norek sprzedanych w domu aukcyjnym KF, w zależności od sezonu aukcyjnego (ferma B)

Farm B owners sold furs at the KF and NAFA auction houses. At the sooner house skins were sold in the seasons 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 (tab. 5). The highest prices during the two seasons were recorded for mahogany male furs, 36.15 EUR on average. In turn, the lowest prices were reached by brown male furs, only 5.01 EUR on average. Over 2006/2007, the most and least expensive male furs were found to be mahogany and brown types. In 2007/2008, the highest male fur prices were paid for brown cross and the lowest for palomino and pastel cross mink. Silverblue female mink had the most expensive furs whereas palomino and pastel pelts were the cheapest.

Over the study period (fig. 3), the highest percentage of furs sold at the KF auction house was for black cross furs and the lowest for silverblue pelts. In the season 2006/2007, sales were the greatest for topaz, mahogany and black furs, and lowest for pearl beige, pastel cross, pastel and dawn. In 2007/2008, the highest and lowest percentages of skins sold were for black cross and silver blue mink, respectively.

The NAFA auction house offered furs for sale during two seasons, that is 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. Average prices for individual colour types of mink furs by season and sex at the NAFA auction house are presented in table 6. The highest prices in 2007/2008 were paid for black cross male furs; they were the lowest for

demi female furs, only 12.91 EUR on average. The lowest and highest prices were offered for, respectively, black and demi female mink furs. Male furs were the most expensive for black cross and the cheapest for mahogany mink, on average. The average price was 25.62 and 14.56 EUR for male and female skins, respectively, in the season 2008/2009. The next season, 2007/2008 was characterised by the highest prices paid for black male furs and the lowest for palomino female skins. What is more, black male furs were the most expensive whereas pearl cross pelts were the cheapest. The lowest prices were paid for pastel and demi female skins. The prices paid for male and female furs averaged 19.40 and 12.94 EUR, respectively.

Table 6. Mean prices for particular colour varieties of mink's furs (EUR) according to sex (♂ – males, ♀ – females) and season, sold in NAFA auction house (farm B)  
Tabela 6. Średnie ceny poszczególnych odmian barwnych skór norek (EUR), w zależności od płci (♂ – samce, ♀ – samice) i sezonu, sprzedanych w domu aukcyjnym NAFA (ferma B)

Colour variety Odmiana barwna	2007/2008		2008/2009	
	♂	♀	♂	♀
Mahogany	24.01	16.96	21.43	13.64
Pastel	–*	–	20.68	14.46
Black cross	29.41	16.77	19.97	12.86
Brown cross	–	–	20.03	–
Palomino	–	–	17.65	12.31
Black	28.25	18.49	23.63	14.27
Sprinklers	28.76	–	19.83	12.92
Pearl cross	27.62	–	16.84	–
Demi	25.43	12.91	20.38	14.46
Other Pozostałe (różne)	15.87	10.06	13.51	8.59
The mean price Średnia cena za skórę	25.62	14.56	19.40	12.94

– the breeder didn't exhibited mink's fur on that auction  
– hodowca nie wystawiał skór na tej aukcji

At the NAFA auction house (fig. 4), the two study seasons of fur sales saw the highest percentage of black cross and the lowest percentage of pearl cross skins sold. Over the season 2007/2008, black cross, demi, black and mahogany types had the highest percentage of furs sold whereas for pearl cross mink the percentage was the lowest. In 2008/2009, fur sales were dominated by palomino, black, mahogany and demi mink. Similarly to the previous season, the lowest number of furs sold was for pearl cross, up to 1% of all the pelts sold over the study period at the NAFA action house.

Analysis of the three study seasons revealed that the highest price paid for a mink fur (averaged over three auction houses, two farms and both sexes) was in the season 2007/2008 (fig. 5).



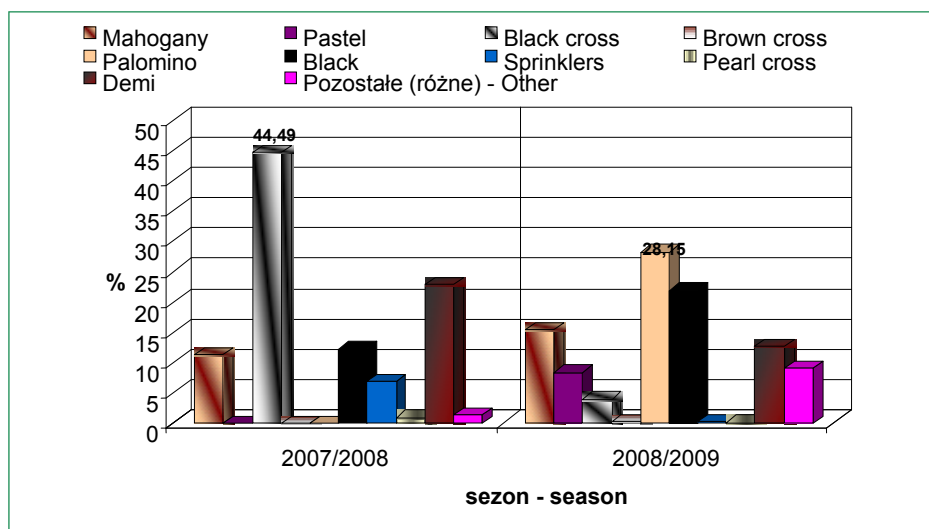


Fig. 4. The structure of distribution of colour varieties of mink's furs sold in NAFA auction house according to auction season (farm B)

Rys. 4. Struktura rozkładu odmian barwnych skór norek sprzedanych w domu aukcyjnym NAFA w zależności od sezonu aukcyjnego (ferma B)

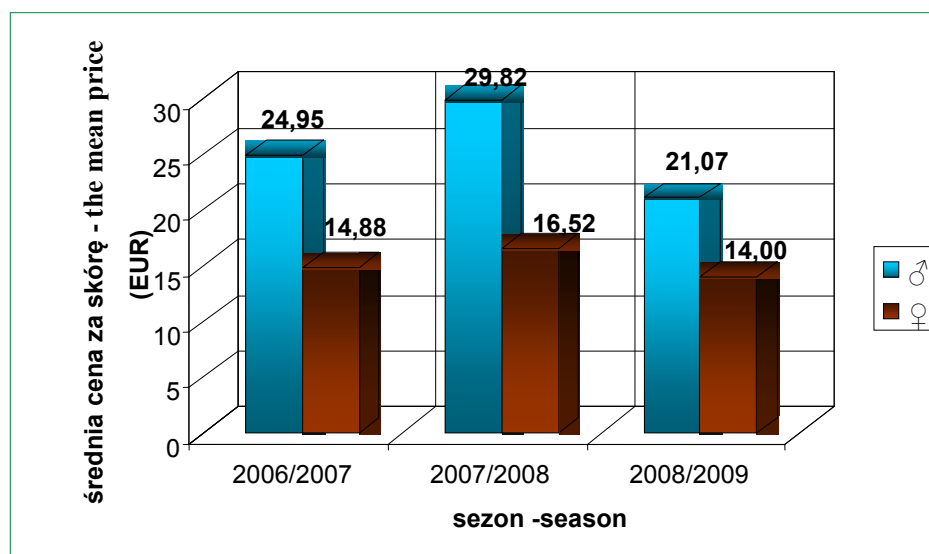


Fig. 5. Mean prices for mink's furs in studied farms including sex (♂-males, ♀-females) and season

Rys. 5. Średnie ceny skór norek w analizowanych fermach, z uwzględnieniem płci (♂-samce, ♀-samice) i sezonu

## CONCLUSIONS

1. To sum up, breeding of fur-bearing animals (including mink) can be risky as there are a number of factors influencing fur production, e.g. fur price fluctuations between individual auction seasons. The study discussed here clearly indicated that this branch of production is associated with enormous uncertainty because of changeable fashion trends on the fur market.

2. Sales of individual colour types depended on season, auction house and farm studied. The greatest sales were recorded for mink skins of the following colour types sold by farm (A and B) owners: scanbrown, scanglow, demi, sapphire, mahogany, topaz, black cross, palomino and black. Buyers at auctions were not always interested in the colour types of mink breed on the farms. Sexual dimorphism of animals was associated with different prices paid for furs. The prices of male furs were by an average of 5.03 EUR higher in the season 2006/2007, 13.30 EUR in 2007/2008 and 7.57 EUR in 2008/2009.

3. The study discussed here demonstrated that, depending on farm, sex and auction house, male furs of mink of the following colour types: mahogany, black cross, brown cross and black were the most profitable in the season 2006/2007 (respectively: 36.15, 33.00, 33.00 and 32.45 EUR, on average). In 2007/2008, prices of black, scanblack, silverblue, brown cross and black cross male furs were the highest (respectively: 45.30, 41.00, 40.00, 33.66 and 29.41 EUR, on average). In the last season, 2008/2009, pastel and black male skins were found to be the most profitable (respectively: 27.13 and 32.63 EUR, on average). By contrast, production of the following female furs was least profitable: palomino, pearl, pastel cross, brown cross and sapphire.

4. Substantial differences between prices were found between individual colour types of mink. The average fur price of a given colour type was influenced by the auction house. In the season 2007/2008, the prices of (farm A) skins sold at the FFS auction house were higher compared with the NAFA auction house. Mahogany, sapphire and white fur prices were by, respectively, 4.98, 6.98 and 4.32 EUR higher. Over the same season, prices of (farm B) black cross skins sold at KF were by 2.28 EUR higher compared with NAFA.

5. The disparity between Polish and international prices of mink furs is decreasing, as indicated by the prices of scanblack, scanbrown and scanglow mink furs which were paid to farmers when compared to auction prices.

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**Streszczenie.** Celem badań była analiza wyników sprzedaży krajowych skór norek w domach aukcyjnych Kopenhagen Fur, Finnish Fur Sales i North American Fur Auctions, pochodzących z dwóch ferm hodowlanych, w trzech sezonach aukcyjnych: 2006/2007, 2007/2008 i 2008/2009. Sprzedaż poszczególnych odmian barwnych wahała się w zależności od sezonu, domu aukcyjnego i badanej fermy. Najbardziej opłacanymi skórami w sezonie 2006/2007 były skóry samców mahogany, black cross, brown cross, black; w sezonie 2007/2008 skóry samców black, scanblack, silverblue, brown cross oraz black, cross, w sezonie 2008/2009 skóry samców pastel i black, a na średnią cenę konkretnej odmiany barwnej miał wpływ dom aukcyjny. Skóry, które były najliczniej sprzedawane przez polskich hodowców, nie zawsze znalazły zainteresowanie wśród kupców na aukcjach. W analizowanym okresie zauważono, że zmniejszyła się dysproporcja pomiędzy średnimi cenami skór polskich a średnimi cenami skór zagranicznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** norka, skóra, cena, aukcja, dom aukcyjny