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## **Market Report Fine Hair by Mr Mark Samuel FEIBP Congress, Belfast, 22 September 2023**

Last year I reported on a small fall in prices for weasel and kolinsky hair after 3 years of enormous increases. It was always unrealistic to expect these high prices to last as not many poor artists would want to splash out \$300 for an artist brush! So alternative materials have replaced sable hair in most high end artist brushes, although a demand still remains for use in some specialist brushes, such as dental ceramic brushes, especially where alternative synthetics don't possess some essential characteristics of sable, such as dental ceramic brushes.

As expected, last years small fall has turned into a much larger one this year, although the falling prices have been far less dramatic than the increases. I would say that prices now are similar to 2021 levels. So even with a 40% fall we're seeing historically high price levels.

Will prices fall further? Demand remains weak but haven't declined further and with these falls may pick up again. The main factor holding up further falls is the supply side from China (and Russia). Not only because of nearly zero demand for skins from the fur industry but also because of authorities clamping down on unregulated wild animal business meaning there are very few sources for raw material now.

Prices for squirrel hair remains stable even though demand is weakening. There is sufficient supply even with difficulties of getting material out of Russia (main source). We can get material imported without much difficulty as no sanctions on hair (there are on synthetics) but the payment system is blocked. So most of the squirrel is now of Chinese origin (or Russian via China).

Badger hair prices have fallen but other fine hairs such as goat, pony, ox are firm as supply becoming limited as factories stop producing.