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Fox Field Day At Montague

The first Demonstration Day of the Montague Fox Study Club was held at the beautiful ranch of Mr. Harry Davison. This ranch situated on the outskirts of the town of Montague is a model of efficiency and cleanliness, and the writer heard many complimentary remarks passed on the nicely white-washed pens and furing houses, as one man remarked: "Why it does not smell like a fox ranch."

This ranch was certainly an ideal place for the members of the enterprising club to meet for their first Fox Field Day. There were over 100 ranchers and visitors present and the Fieldman, Mr. W. F. Burke of the Provincial Department Agriculture had a busy afternoon, examining the 50 or more foxes that were placed on the table.

Mr. Burke deserves credit for the way he criticises each fox, without fear or favour, he tells each breeder just where that particular fox is weak or where it excels. This part of the program was followed with keen interest by all present as everyone seemed anxious to know just what to look for in the ideal fox.

Immediately following Mr. Burke's remarks on live foxes, there was a killing and pelting demonstration conducted by the chief peltier of a Charlottetown Fur Sales House. The fox was killed by injecting strychnine into the heart by means of a hypodermic needle, the most human way of killing known, and easily done by the ordinary rancher. In pelting each operation was explained, showing the ranchers how they should proceed and telling them what they should not do. The proper use of the stretching board was also shown in detail again explaining how a pelt may be improved or spoiled by proper or improper stretching.

Dr. C. K. Gunn of the Experimental Fox Farm at Summerside was present and demonstrated the use of the microscope. He had slides prepared showing the different eggs from parasites that attack the foxes as well as the difference between prime and unprime fox skins. He also demonstrated the use of the microscope in testing the males that a breeder would use for polygamous matings.

This was very interesting to the breeders, as Dr. G. Ennis Smith, Superintendent of the Fox Farm at Summerside, showed the proper way to hold the female secure to procure the vaginal smear and followed through each step until the smear was under the microscope. During Dr. Smith's remarks he strongly supported the work Mr. Burke was undertaking in trying to bring before the breeders the most desirable type of fox to keep. He also advised the breeders to mate like types of foxes together and not to mate foxes with unlike silver bars, or the results would be undesirable. In feeding, if cereals are kept in storage too long and they become rancid they lose much of their nutritional value.

Dr. Smith was kept busy during the afternoon answering the many and varied questions from different breeders, regarding the feeding and breeding troubles they had in their individual ranches. Each breeder found Dr. Smith a sympathetic listener to their troubles and ready and willing to give what help he could.

Multiplicity Of Problems Facing The Fox Industry

Research Work At The Dominion. Experimental Fox Ranch, Summerside, Outlined By Superintendent.

(By G. Ennis Smith Superintendent.)

Cereal Content of Fox Rations

Cereals play an important part in the nutrition of foxes. Fox breeders have realized that meat should be fed while still fresh, but have not realized that cereals should also be fed in the fresh state; cereals deteriorate with storage through the action of moulds, yeasts, weevils, etc. Raw cereals have consistently produced better results than any other form of cereals, particularly during the fall months. Experiments are being carried out with rations which contain fresh raw cereals. Wheat, barley, oats and corn grains are being sent to the mill and ground, when required, to insure that the cereals are fresh.

The So-called Milk Fever

During recent years fatalities among new born pups have increased as a result of the females suffering from caked udders. The factors that tend to produce this condition are being studied. The results so far indicate that pregnant females should take the maximum amount of exercise and that ground bone or bonemeal should be included in the ration, and overfeeding avoided. The results definitely indicate that rations suitable for pregnant females in large pens are not favourable for those in small pens.

The Silver Phase

Records are being kept of the body area and the density of the silver phase of all the experimental foxes. So far the most important factor appears to be the necessity of mating like types of silver together. When like types of silver have been mated together an increase in the body area of the silver has occurred in succeeding years, while the reverse has occurred when unlike types of silver were mated together, that is the foxes have had less silver as one year old than when pups. The mating of like types of silver is more important than mating according to the body area of the silver phase.

Width of Silver Band

This particular phase is being studied very extensively. Micro-metric determinations of the width of the silver band have been made of all the experimental foxes, and these have been correlated to the

breeding results. Here again it appears necessary to mate like types of silver together, or foxes closely related. When this has been carried out in each succeeding year there has been an increase in both brightness and width of the silver band, whereas when unlike types of silver have been mated together a decrease in the width of the silver band has been obtained which decreased still further in each succeeding year with individual foxes.

Fur Characters, Quality

In the research work with regard to the inheritance of the different fur characters an attempt is being made to evolve definite yardsticks for the various characters in order that measurements may be recorded independent of any personal factor. It is hoped that such yardsticks will definitely determine what actually is quality in silver fur and be confirmed by breeding results as to whether the attributes so measured are a criterion of inherent quality. In the final analysis the inherent quality of the foxes is determined by the quality it will produce. Here again the results indicate the necessity of mating like types of fur together. When this has been carried out the foxes have improved in each succeeding year, whereas when unlike types of foxes have been mated together, instead of improving with age they have steadily become worse. There are many known cases where well furred pups have turned into samsons the next year.

Vitamin Requirements

Of all the various constituents of the diet the vitamins appear to be the most important growth promoting factors, also play an essential role in breeding and in the production of fur qualities of foxes in captivity. Experiments are being carried out to determine the influence of the various vitamins upon the increase in live weight and the development of the fur during the fall months and on breeding results in general. An abundant amount of vitamin C in the ration appears to be essential during the fall months for obtaining length, strength and colour of the fur, and also a favourable increase in live weight. During the gestation period vitamins B, A and D appear to be the influential factors with regard to the ultimate growth and development of the pups after birth.

Physiological Effect of Anthelmintics and Therapeutics

Experimental work is being carried out to obtain information regarding the physiological effect and the lethal dose of different therapeutics and anthelmintics. This experimental work should give information so that these can be administered with a greater degree of efficiency and safety.

Digestion Trials

Experiments are under way to determine the digestibility of different classes of meat and other constituents of fox rations. It is hoped that such experiments will help to prevent the numerous fatalities that occur each year as a result of digestive disturbances.

Control of External Parasitic Infestation

This question has been explored and, after spraying the nests and kennels with fuel oil twice a year, no fleas or earmites have been observed on any of the experimental foxes for several years. These results have been obtained without the use of flea powders or earmite remedies.

Control of Internal Parasitic Infestation

While experiments are being carried out with regard to the efficiency and toxicity of different worm remedies, an effort is also being made to ascertain if these parasites can be controlled without direct administration of worm remedies. Different sections of the ranch are being systematically sprayed with different larvicides. Although it is too early as yet to give any definite information, quite favourable results have been obtained by spraying the soil bottom pens with salt and borax solutions. It is hoped from this experimental work that ways and means may be devised for raising pups in soil bottom pens without fear of worm infestation. The present general practice of confining the growing pups to small pens in covered sheds appears to

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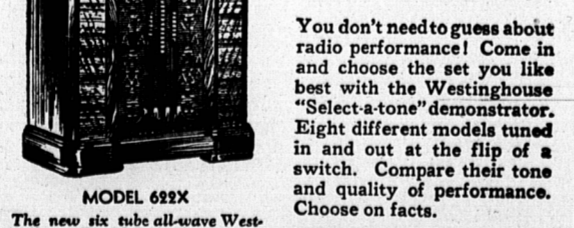
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