MODERN FARMER

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox Farming

In this week's Montreal Standard is a very splendid write-up of Ernie Mill and family, excellent photos and interesting facts regarding the ranch, the home and the family activities. Islanders will all be pleased to see Ernie and family receive such nice recognition.

Michael E. Dederer, President and General Manager Seattle Fur Exchange, recently addressed a gathering of western fox ranchers on market types of foxes and mink.

No man in the fur business is better qualified than Mike Dederer to tell you what types of fox and mink skins are most preferred today.

I have been asked to speak to you on "Market Types". The meaning of this subject, as explained to me, indicates that my talk should cover the type of fox and mink we should produce today in order to obtain the best prices, as well as assure us of a steady market in future years.

In other words, it is not desirable to produce a fox or mink for only one year and then have it lose favor; we should produce fox and mink that will bring a good average price year in and year out.

When speaking to groups before I have endeavored to point out the mistake in producing animals that will be in demand for a limited time, showing how the gains resulting from prices obtained for that short period could easily be lost because of the severe declines that sometimes take place on so-called freakish type skins.

What a Good Fox Should Have

The Associated M and M Fur Farmers' first interest having been in foxes, let us discuss these animals first:

In speaking of silver fox in general we should not lose sight of the standard fox when we discuss types, as the time will come when standard foxes will be produced only in about the same numbers as the different mutations, and this could result in having about the same price structure.

It is very apparent that in producing certain types of mutations, standard foxes are of necessity produced at the same time, which in my opinion, makes for a very healthy situation. With the exception of the early days when foxes were raised in limited quantities, there has always been just one type of skin to raise; that is, one well furred, of good size, good color and of reasonably good quality as far as texture is concerned. The underfur should blend in with the guard hair, it should not be a distinct different color. If you produce a fox of this description whether it is a standard or a mutation you cannot help but do well with them, even though the market is not any better than it has been the last several months.

Some of you may smile at the description I have given you but I can come back with the answer that there are many fur farmers in the United States who produce just such foxes, and if some of the farmers can produce that type animal today there is no reason why all of you cannot do it.

Study of Breeding Necessary

To produce such a fox, however, requires more than just buying good breeding stock, giving them good housing, and feeding them good feed. It requires a study of good breeding, which so many fur farmers lose sight of. It also requires the study of fur. I have made the statement many times before, and no doubt will make it many times again, that if you will show me a fur farmer who understands fur I am willing to make a wager I will see good foxes. If I were to go on his ranch—even though I had never been there before. A man who understands fur cannot help but wish to produce as good skins as he might have seen on another farm. Invariably the poorest fur farmer is one who does not know anything about a skin. Attempts have been made to teach fur farmers to understand fur, and I believe more and more effort should be directed along this line so they will have the desire to produce the type skin they know is good. More and more shows should be held where the fur farmers not only have an opportunity to observe someone grading out furs, but where they become involved in the contest.

After having the general description I just gave you, we can proceed to the different type foxes.

Types of Foxes

The Standard Silver should be very flashy in silver, not a white but rather a metallic color, and should have a bar of good length, rather than just one of bright half or three-quarter inch on top. Regadless of how heavy the fox may appear, if the bar is short, even though it is bright, it will soon break off and be a poor looking fox.

Next we will consider the whiteface silver. This type skin should be even more flashy than the standard silver, and whether it is a ring neck or not is immaterial. In order to produce a fox more flashy than a standard the underfur should be of a lighter blue color, and the belly fur should be very much the same color as the back. A whiteface silver that is half silver and half black is a very undesirable type, and will find a poorer market than just a fairly good standard silver.

Then let us consider the Platinum fox. These should be neither too dark nor too white. If the skins are too dark they become less desirable, and if they are too white they are too conspicuous and will not make up into attractive garments. The underfur in your fine platinums should be even lighter than that in the whiteface fox. A fine platinum should have proper markings as a large number of these skins, as well as the white face foxes, are made into scarfs. Uniform characteristics are more necessary in whitefaces and platinums than in standards as it is very difficult to match them out if they are all different strains and different color variations.

The Pearl Platinum fox has been exceptionally well received by a number of persons in the trade, but during the past year they have not done as well as previously simply because the number of pearl platinums that have been raised have been produced without following good breeding practices, which has resulted in a number of the skins having a rusty cast, making them very undesirable. Clear colored pearl platinums are well liked by the trade, and this type should prove a leader when larger quantities of uniform skins are placed on the market. So far the number of good pearls and good Pearlatenas have been so limited it has not yet been possible to get enough of them together to pull the manufacturing trade into the article. Up until now they have continued to be a specialty article.

Other foxes such as the Glacier blue have only appeared in limited numbers, and it is too early to say just how the trade will accept some of these new color variations. I firmly believe if the Glacier Blues are produced in fairly good quantities, and of good fur, the trade will take to them very well.

I strongly urge fur farmers to maintain a herd of uniform type and quality fox so they will have a reasonable number of each type skin when they are offered for sale, rather than a limited number of many types. Uniformity is one of the very important factors in the selling of fox skins.

Mink Mutations

The various mink mutations that have come into the picture in recent years have resulted in the mink industry being advertised to persons in every walk of life throughout the United States, as well as foreign countries. It is surprising how well the terms "Natural" Mink, "Silverblu" mink, "Royal Pastel" mink, "Blufrost" mink, "Royal Koh-i-nor" mink, etc., are known to the average man and woman on the street, and their reactions to these mutations have become a very interesting study to some of us in the fur trade, especially the reaction of the women when they go to look at coats manufactured from mink, natural or otherwise, in the retail stores.

Two very important factors should be considered when obtaining the reactions of a prospective customer. The first is "the type and character of the mink;" second, "How the skin is made up."

Solid Colors Preferred

The majority of women examining fur garments today react most favorably to those mink that have one solid color, whether it be the natural or a mutation. Of the mutation mink that have so far been produced in quantities we find the Silverblu have met with the best response from the retail customers. However, from close observation it would seem there will be more women who will prefer mink of the type of the Royal Pastel, simply because they are so beautiful in character, and still not too conspicuous to be desirable when large quantities are available and made into garments. The few Royal Pastel garments made so far have had enthusiastic reception from the retail customers.

Importance of Manufacture

The second factor, "How the skins are manufactured," is extremely important, particularly when considering such mink as the Royal Koh-i-nor. This mutation is particularly beautiful when used for trimmings or made into small garments, if the manufacturer has an unusual pattern to work with, but when Royal Koh-i-nor have been made into the usual style coat they have not met with the response enjoyed by other mutations. The Bluefrost have not been as ready sellers as it was first thought they might be, but here again is a mutation that might find better reception if some new method of manufacture were used. Usually the designers in the fur trade find styles to suit a particular skin, and perhaps before another season's skins are available the designers will bring out something new that will obtain the desired results for Bluefrost.

One of the most gorgeous garments I have had an opportunity to see this year was made of white mink, but here we must consider the fact that the quantities of fine white mink are small, and while they remain small only a limited number of garments can be manufactured and they should find a fairly ready market. However, if large quantities of white mink were produced they, no doubt, would be one of the most difficult furs to sell because of the limited possible retail outlet.

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Mutations: Blue Frost
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- NEWSY NOTES -

By Agricola

The Corn Marigold

The following letter from Wood Islands, P. E. I., came to hand recently:—"Dear Sir: You may be interested to know that there is a weed in Wood Islands which is not listed in any of the books on Botany that I have seen. It is supposed to have been introduced from Scotland as a garden flower and that it escaped from cultivation and now is quite a nuisance, fortunately, however, confined to a few farms. It has established itself in the vicinity for many years but its name was never discovered until a few days ago. I was curious about its identity and found, by enquiry at Ottawa, that it is the Corn Marigold, known to Botanists as **Chrysanthemum segetum.** This weed is quite widely distributed in the British Isles and is probably well known to you. Its foliage is quite unlike the garden flower called Marigold, but its disk and rays are not very dissimilar. Perhaps you might give your readers a full description of the plant. - - - Yours sincerely, C. S. MacDonald."

This is very interesting because I have this Chrysanthemum growing in the garden here. I got the seed from Devonshire before the war, and have had some trouble to preserve the strain since the plant flowers well, but does not ripen its seeds. I am lucky if I can raise two plants in the season. Perhaps this locality is its northern limit.

Plant breeders saw possibilities in this British wild flower and took it in hand. Now one may buy seed of C. segetum "Evening Star" with bright golden flowers 3 to 4 inches across; C. s. "Yellowstone", rich yellow flowers, fully double; and other forms.

Its name indicates that it is found in grain-fields. The plant is annual glabrous (devoid of hairs), covered with whitish bloom, erect, sparingly branched. 12 to 18 inches high. Leaves obovate, toothed and lobed, lower pinnatifid. Flower heads daisy-like, but golden yellow, about 2 inches across, stalk stout, thickened upwards.

This "daisy" is found in Europe, N. Africa, and W. Asia; and now N. America! As my correspondent says it is not listed in any of our American manuals.

I am recording this as a "new plant" for 1946, and have great pleasure in crediting Mr. MacDonald with its discovery. If it is really a menace as a weed, the new 2,4.D. weed killer would control it, I imagine.

The Marsh Hawk

Next to the Goshawk, this seems to be our commonest bird of prey. One sees it flying low along the fences, "beating" the undergrowth in search of the small fry that lurk in such places. It cannot be mistaken for any other hawk, for its white rump (or base of tail) attracts the eye and, to use slang, gives it away. Its diet includes rats, mice, snakes, frogs, and various large insects, varied with sparrows and similar birds. Occasionally an individual develops a taste for poultry and becomes an "outlaw." One cannot, however, hold all Marsh Hawks responsible for this, any more than we can blame the human race because some are killers. In the last 20 years we have lost two chickens by Marsh Hawks, and many times that number by Goshawks.

Marsh or Rabbit Hawk, Marsh Harrier, AOU. 331. Summer resident, fairly common. **Adult Male:** upper-parts gray or ashy, upper tail-coverts (rump) white, tail gray, irregularly marked or barred with blackish; upper breast pearl-gray, lower breast and belly white spotted and barred with rufous. **Adult Female:** upper-parts dark brownish, head and neck streaked, and the wing coverts spotted or margined, with rufous; upper tail-coverts (rump) white, middle tail-feathers barred with ash and black, others barred with buff and black; under-parts reddish buff, streaked dark brown. Immature birds are similar to the female but rather darker all over.

Male, length 19; wing 13.8; tail 9.0. Female L. 22, W., 15; T., 10 inches.

Dr. Taverner gives this hawk an extremely good character—"the natural enemy of field mice and probably does more to keep their numbers within bounds than any other single natural influence." Here is an opportunity for teachers to make known to their scholars the reason for protecting this useful bird.

The Mountain Holly

From the neighborhood of Southwest, Lot 16, comes a branch with berries, and a short note: "Dear Agricola, this twig was taken from a bush 2-3 feet high, growing on light soil. It is in a field where blueberries are very plentiful. Kindly tell me the name. Are the berries poisonous? —Anonymous."

The name is Mountain Holly, **Nemopanthus mucronata.** Notice the ashy-gray bark and branching habit. Leaves alternate, deciduous, elliptic-oblong, thin, rather paler below, borne on slender stalks. Flowers on **long slender peduncles,** followed by small red **hanging** berries.

I have never heard of anybody being harmed by the berries, which I find sweet but with a peculiar "after-taste" resembling that of the English holly. It is well to remember, however, that there is a relative with the specific name "vomitoria", the Carolina Tea, whose action is **emetic.** Another relative, of better reputation, grows in South America; it is the Yerba Mate, or Paraguay Tea, whose leaves are used as we use tea from India or China.

As a general rule, stick to the berries which other folk are eating. If a berry is neglected or refused by the people generally, depend upon it there is a good reason for this, though one may have to go a long way back to find it.

Prices And Produce

Writing in the Countryman (English magazine), Raymond Bush says—"How much more blessed to sell than to produce! A ton of bananas landed at £48 retails for £121. It seems to me that the only way to fix a reasonable profit is to limit the ultimate selling price to double the sum paid to the producer. We should then soon have more producers and fewer middlemen.

The Canary Islanders offered tomatoes to our importers at 9s. 7d. for a 26 lb. basket, and the retail price here of 1s. 4d. a lb. turns that into 32s. 6d.

A friend back form Ecuador showed me some superb Panama hats. These are woven by the native women and sold to the merchants at about 1s. 4d. apiece. After trimming and cleaning they are resold to the Ney York retailers at 50s. apiece, to be retailed at anything up to £20 (400s.)"

This sort of transaction should excite no surprise; it is common in all countries. We in P. E. I. suffered dreadfully from it for 19 long pre-war years, and now after a brief interlude of ill-based prosperity, there are signs of recession.

Perhaps Mr. Bush's idea of limiting the selling price might do good to the consumer but I doubt whether it would help the producer. All the charges of distribution, in any case, are pushed back into his account. It is not without reason that one hears of farmers' strikes in Canada, but the best and most efficacious way of improving the farmer's position is for him to support his Federation to the fullest extent, and to evolve some co-operative method of selling his own produce.

Village Games, Concluded

Marbles and tip-cat were games that required skill, but there were other games of the school yard, where brawn rather than brain was requisite. Midway between the two groups was Tig (or Tag), which we called "Tiggy". This is a very ancient game, based on the pursuit and capture of an enemy, and may indeed go back to prehistoric times. In our game two semicular "bays" were provided (after the fashion of "cities of refuge") one at each end of the playground, wherein were housed all the players but one who was stationed midway. (He had been selected by the old counting-out rhyme "eenie, meenie, minie, mo," etc., which, I've been told, is of Celtic origin). The players tried to run to the opposite bay without being "tigged" (slapped) by the fellow in the middle. If tigged he must either stay and help his captor to "tig" others, or he must take his captor's place, alone. There were a number of variations; of which I need only mention "Tiggy touchwood." If a player could reach some spot where he could touch a paling, a tree-trunk, or any other wooden article, his pursuer could not legally tig him! In the meantime the other players ran wild to draw the pursuer's attention.

"Mounty-Kitty" — which The Countryman calls "Mounty-cuddy" —was a much rougher game. Sides were chosen, an equal number of boys (usually 6) on each side. Lots were drawn and the losing side had to be the Kitty or Cuddy —that is, the ass. Their captain stood with his back against the school wall; a boy would bend so that the top of his head touched the captain's middle, next boy would place his head against the preceding lad's rear-end and so on. When the chain was complete, the opposing captain made a run and a vault, as if playing leapfrog, and landed astride the "Kitty". The rest followed and as the combined weight was on one or two boys it was a hard matter for them to avoid "breaking down." If they sustained the weight while a counting out rhyme was said, the other side had to become the Kitty. If they broke down they must again be Kitty. This game was hard on their clothes too.

The schoolgirls did not seem to go in for any games at all. They used to stand in groups, watching the boys' antics, but saying nothing.

The Black Carpet Beetle

A reader recently sent some larvae for naming but as they were new to me I sent them on to Dr. Cannon, the Provincial Entomologist. He tells me that they are larvae of the Black Carpet Beetle, which is found in houses in the Province. As it is destructive to carpets, rugs, and cloth generally, it is an unwelcome visitor, and Dr. Cannon has got out a circular telling how to deal with it. This may be had on application to the Entomological Laboratory, City.

Guernsey Breeders Meeting

DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Saturday Sept. 14th. at 8.30 P.M. D.S.T.

Dr. A. R. Campbell, Secretary Canadian Guernsey Breeders Association, Guelph, Ont., will address the Guernsey Breeders of P. E. I. Dr. Campbell has an important message for all Breeders.

A full attendance is urgently requested.

GUY RODD,
Sec'y. P. E. I. Guernsey Club.

Rains Help Harvest In Prairie Provinces

WINNIPEG, Man., Sept. 13 — General rains over the prairies held up harvesting operations during the past week but it is now in full swing again with the exception of southern and central Alberta where it should start again by this week end very little threshing remains to be done in southern Manitoba. In Northern Manitoba and in southern Saskatchewan another week of good weather will finish this year's crops. Central and northern Saskatchewan will not be finished for two to three weeks and Alberta will probably be a week later than this. Yields in all areas are quite good considering the peculiar season and the total yield for Canadian prairies will be well above average for the last ten years.

Scarcity of labor is reported in a few localities and machinery repairs are scarce in most places but are not serious, according to the final crop report of the Department of Agriculture of the Canadian National Railways.

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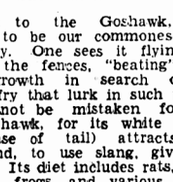

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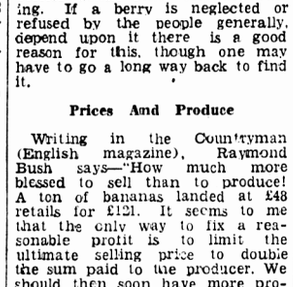

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Vets Turn Rangeland Into Co-Op Farm

Tractor treads are rolling over the old Matador Ranch grazing lands, 45 miles north of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, as 15 ex-servicemen begin to reap rewards of large-scale farming through co-operative enterprise.

Matador is part of a broad plan to rehabilitate veterans on a purely voluntary basis on Crown lands in the province. Three tractors, a jeep and other farm equipment for Matador were purchased through a loan on the members' re-establishment grants and are owned collectively. Later, the men hope to establish a communal school, medical centre, children's playground.

Inhabited during the war only by wandering herds of cattle, Matador presented a problem in pioneer farming. When the advance party arrived in April, breaking trail in a jeep over five miles of prairie from the nearest road, they saw only a vast stretch of unbroken pastureland. The nearest farmhouse was six miles away. Ploughing would have to begin immediately if a summer harvest was to be gathered.

Splitting up into crews, the veterans attacked the twin problems of housing and farming, one crew trucking former RCAF buildings 36 miles to re-assemble them into temporary dwellings, the other working in shifts to move in equipment and get ploughing under way on the 15 sections of fertile rangeland.

Work is planned ahead through an organized council. Completion of expanded housing plans will soon allow the four married members to move in their families. Rental of the land, now held on lease, will be charged on a scale of 1-6 to 1-8 of the crop, depending on crop returns. If purchased at the end of 10 years, as the 33-year lease allows, the price will be determined by the productive performance of the land over the 10-year period.

Six months of hard work have been completed. Approximately 2,500 acres have been ploughed, and harvest on 365 acres sown with flax will bring a return of $10,000, according to estimates of the Co-operative secretary. The community now has six pure-bred Jersey cows to supply it with milk, and August rains boosted hopes for a better-than-average grain yield.