

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox and Mink Farming

Less P. E. I. Seed, More Table Potatoes In Storage Than Same Time In 1948

- NEWSY NOTES -

By Agricola

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Good news for mink ranchers is contained in the announcement of the New York Auction Company's mink sale held late last week. It was one of the major surprises of the current fur season when Silverbiu mink prices which have been easing off for some weeks staged a sharp comeback. The firming up of Silverbiu was not expected by the majority of the trade and many in the sales room admitted they had come to secure bargains but with all elements of the industry participating in the bidding prices were estimated to be equal to New York's December sale.

While most of the trade was surprised at the turnaround in demand for the article the reaction of many was favorable to the strength shown. This they explained is because Silverbiu was felt to be at a point where it was "too cheap" and having a depressing effect on mink prices. Average size males were noted bringing \$20. to \$25. females were bringing \$15. to \$17. some in the neighborhood of \$20. About 60 to 70 per cent of the 46 to 50 thousand skins offered were sold. Alutian Blue Mink offered for the first time brought good demand from the trade and a top price of \$31. Although about only 2,000 skins were offered, keen bidding and wide interest was shown in them.

A fairly large offering of about 14,000 skins of Royal Pastel mink was reported 90% sold at 10% higher prices. Regarding Alutian, most of the males ranged between \$37. and \$55. and females in the \$30. to \$35. bracket. As in the case of standard mink at recent sales females showed a little more strength than many had expected prior to the sale. The best price for a lot of female Alutian was \$50. In the Breach of Spring Alutian known as Arctics, 601 skins were all sold with a \$70. male top price and a \$41 top for females. In Royal Pastels there was a \$50 top for males and \$32.50 for females. Breach of Spring Pastels showed \$41. as the best male price, \$20. for females. For fairly good quality Pastels males and females mixed prices averaged between \$28. to \$35.

Details of last week's sale at Copenhagen, Denmark, have been received from London representatives. Top price first quality mink brought \$25., average price males \$17., females \$14. Silver Fox firsts, top price \$36., average \$30.; seconds averaged \$24. and thirds \$19. Platinum White Face and Blue Fox were held for higher prices than the customers would pay so were not sold.

Women's Wear Daily, New York, commenting on the recent auction in Montreal has the following, which ranchers will agree carries with it considerable encouragement. Evidence of recovery in silver fox and reduction in the available supply for 1949 was presented to the salesroom at the opening of Canadian Fur Auction Sales Co. (Quebec) Ltd. two-day silver fox sale today. Disposing of a widely circulated rumour that there existed a carry-over of 100,000 skins, Arthur C. Prentice, general manager and auctioneer, announced that he had received authoritative information to the effect that the available supply, inclusive of nearly 25,000 pelts to be marked at the current sale, amounts to only 90,000 skins of all categories of silver and mutation fox. This means that, apart from this sale, the net supply is only about 65,000 skins, compared with 200,000 skins a year ago.

Mr. Prentice made the announcement during the marketing of the first section of platinum fox. This consisted of 2,510 skins and brought encouraging bidding, resulting in the sale of approximately 65 per cent of the catalog at an advance of 10 per cent over January sale in the opinion of trade observers. Top price was \$25. paid for medium "A" grade and also for large, light select. Other lots of medium "A". Many good average skins ranged between \$13 and \$18.

Inferior platinum numbering 1,400 skins, was also figured as 65 per cent sold but unchanged from January, with a range between \$8 and \$20, and many from \$9 to \$14. Most pronounced activity was in white marked skins of which 2,710 were offered. The salesroom estimated this article to be selling on a basis of 85 to 90 per cent sold, at an advance of better than 10 per cent. Early prices ranged between \$9 and \$10, with average lots \$13 to \$15.50. Most sales were made to Canadian and European dealers. White, marked skins continued to sell in the late afternoon on the same basis as earlier. Both selected full silver and regular full silver maintained the strength shown by the platinum and white marked catalog. Each was reported by salesroom experts as about 80 per cent sold at an approximate advance of 10 per cent. Selected full silver (1,374) ranged from \$14 to \$23, with average lots mostly \$17 to \$19. Regular full silver (2,236) sold between \$11.50 and \$17, with many around \$13.50 to \$15.50. Americans, Canadians and European dealers bought both selected and regular fulls.

Prince Edward Island had only half the estimated amount of seed potatoes in storage on March 1, 1949 as compared to March 1, 1948. But there is over twice this amount of table stock on hand. Figures from the Marketing Service Report of the Dominion Department of Agriculture show the following comparisons with last year.

Total storage figures for all Canada show 261,233 tons on March 1, 1949 as compared to 265,446 in 1948; 261,877 in 1947; 151,802 in 1946; 197,916 in 1945; 184,504 in 1944.

Ontario is steady with 3,401 against 2,459 in eastern and 30,890 against 30,653 western. Prairies have less on hand this year with 694 tons compared to 1,343 in 1948. British Columbia has some 5,000 tons less with 12,574 in storage this year against 17,430 last.

A branch of the English firm of C. W. Martin & Sons, Ltd. are getting ready to process Alaska sealskins in Toronto. The firm will be known as Martin-Schneuffer Ltd., Fur Dressers and Dyers. They hope to begin operations by the end of the year. The process of drying and dressing sealskins is an extremely complicated one, demanding great skill on the part of the operators. To function properly it will be necessary for the new firm to have transferred to them certain key workers from England so as to train Canadian workers in the various operations as well as to bring over some machinery from England. Canadian sealskins have been processed by the Martins in London for years and they will probably continue to process a considerable number of them, likely the largest part, until the new

Tonnage of seed held in P.E.I. on March 1, 1949 was 41,520 tons as against 82,440 in 1948; table 46,000 tons in year against 21,526 in 1948. In Nova Scotia, seed figures this year are 4,535 tons compared to 4,274 last year. But there is also twice the amount of table stock held this year with 4,290 tons against 2,048 last year.

The tonnage on March 1 this year on hand in New Brunswick shows for seed 52,401 against 43,243 last year and for table 66,235 compared to 44,910.

The Maritime total this year is 214,443 tons compared to 199,217 in 1948. Quebec shows an increase this year with 20,261 tons compared to 14,344.

The compiled statistics on fur production of Scandinavian countries shows that during 1947 Sweden and Norway produced about 219,000 silver fox, 177,300 blue fox and 289,000 mink. The total world production was estimated to be about 700,000 silver fox, 190,000 blue fox and 2,350,000 mink. On the basis of these statistics the Scandinavian countries contributed about one-third of the silver fox production, over 90% of the blue fox and about 12% of the mink. The United States was the largest producer of ranch-ed silver fox and mink, accounting for 253,000 silver fox and 1,526,000 mink. Canada was second with 185,000 silver fox and 600,000 mink.

Richardson's Owl. This is one of our rarer owls, and only one specimen is on record in this Province. The 1916 list says "One specimen taken, 1905", but gives no other particulars. It is said to be a rare winter visitor in N. B. (Moore: "Birds of N.B.", 1928), and it also appears in a list of N.S. birds, this time without any further information. Dr. Taverner considered it the rarest Canadian owl, and refers to it as the Arctic Saw-whet Owl.

Though nowhere abundant, it is found in northern Canada up to the limit of trees, from the MacKenzie River to the Maritimes. It winters south "to the edge of the U.S.A."—Peterson.

Richardson's Owl. AOU. 371. Rare Winter visitor? Adults: Forehead heavily spotted white on the brown feathers; ear-tufts none; facial discs framed with black; eyes yellow; bill yellowish. Upper parts generally grayish-brown; back and wing coverts spotted white; tail with 4 or 5 imperfect white bars. Underparts white, vaguely streaked with grayish brown. Legs and feet heavily feathered whitish, barred with grayish-brown. Immature birds: Upper parts cinnamon-brown with a few more or less concealed white spots. Breast like back; belly buffy; tail as above. Length of adult 10 inches.

The Planet Saturn (♄) The unique set of appendages which we know as "Saturn's Rings" has given rise to several conjectures; some of which, though backed by famous names, are rather far-fetched. It was in the year 1859 that the physicist Maxwell published the views that were recalled in these Notes last week. I.e. that the rings are composed of an immense number of relatively small bodies which revolve round the planet. This theory still finds favor among astronomers. The German astronomer Struve, however, has made computations of the total mass of the rings, and states, as a result, that they seem composed solely of immaterial light, "a film of dust only", or of "a cloud of fog." Later, a Professor Bernard was inclined to adopt the idea that the rings were self-luminous; while Prof. Birkeland says that the luminosity of the rings is due to electric radiation, the planet being considered as a magnet.

stance even more unpleasant than the unbelievable cold. That cold has thrown down the water, etc., as ice, and left methane (marsh gas) as the most prominent constituent of Saturn's atmosphere. There is also a slight admixture of ammonia—which does not improve it!

For the physical and orbital elements of Saturn, the reader is referred to that excellent little publication, the Observer's Handbook; merely quoting the diameter of the planet as 72,000 miles, and its mean distance from the Sun as 886 millions of miles.

A Proportional Compass Sometimes, in making a copy of a natural history or scientific drawing, it may be reduced in size. Suppose, for instance, that it is necessary to represent a right-angled triangle whose sides are 6, 8, and 10 inches, on a sheet of paper only 6 inches square. With a desire to leave a border for explanation, etc., the triangle must be reduced to one-third of its size. This can be done by arithmetical calculation, by the use of a scale, or quicker of all, by a proportional compass. Such a compass is few made, and as for endurance, I've had mine for 30 years or more!

I selected a strip of good even-grained wood, 3 1/2 inches long, half an inch wide, and one-quarter of an inch thick. This was sawn into two pieces, each 17 and one-quarter of an inch long. With a fine plane, and beginning at 10 inches from one end, each piece was neatly tapered to that end, so that it was only one-quarter inch across. The other end was treated in the same manner, but the tapered part was only 3 and one-half inches long. A hole was now drilled through the rods 4 and one-quarter inches from the shorter tapered ends. This was done to permit the insertion of a small brass bolt which acted as a hinge for the two rods that it united. Common stick-pins were headed and driven into the ends of the rods for compass-points; they projected about one-eighth of an inch.

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Does Standard Pronunciation Matter? A recent letter in the Public Forum quoted an opinion that "correct pronunciation does not matter provided we understand one another." That is understandable, but in the long run it fails to work. The Romans had an adverb which they spelt "nunc", and pronounced noonk. The ancient Germans, who aped the Romans in many things, took the word and turned it into "nun" (pronounced noon). We can imagine the Teutones telling the Romans that it did not matter, "provided it was understood." To a later generation, the descendants of the Teutones, called the Saxons, crossed to Britain, where the inhabitants dropped the end letter and made the word "nu" (noo). When I was a lad, all Northumbrians called the word noo, and the Scottish people did the same. The Southrons got the word and turned it into "now", and in this form it is enshrined in the English language. Now, at each step it might be urged that it didn't matter, since both parties understood, but the final result was that neither the Roman nor the German understood the Briton! That of course is but one instance, but most of our common words may be traced to other languages, with a little trouble. I have heard it argued that such changes must take place in a living language. I prefer to think of them as degenerations leading to the death of the language! Anyway, that is what happened to the Roman language (Latin), and it behooves us to be careful of our own. Here are a few words, picked up here and there, that need correcting. They are: prelate, dynasty, regime, gesture, and infamous. I heard them as PRE-late, DIE-nasty, re-JIME, GUEST-her, and in-FAME-us. I was taught to call them PRE-late, DYN-asty, RAY-ZHEEM, JEST-your, and IN-fam-us. Now, gentle reader, to your dictionary, and see who is right! That will fix them in your mind. And notice, too, how the genius of the English language pushes the accent towards the front of the word, whereas in the French language the tendency is to emphasize the last syllable, as in the word regime. BABEL GONE The tower of Babel, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, has completely disappeared.