

FOR FARMERS, STOCK BREEDERS AND GARDENERS

NEWSY NOTES

BY AGRICOLA

FEED THE BIRDS CONTEST

Yet another thought strikes me in relation to this most valuable contest. It will be no news to readers that another bird pest is spreading into Canada from the southward: I refer to the European starling, a bird not unlike the grackle, and with the same bad habit of molesting the smaller birds. This bird has been seen in the districts round Hudson's Bay last summer, and may easily have been present in our own province, though not recorded. It is very prolific and hardy, and assembles in great numbers, just as grackles do.

It is evident then that the small birds are to have a new foe (as well as the grackles and crows) and that ultimately their association with man will be their best protection. The marauding birds as a rule keep away from human habitations, and if we can show the juncos, sparrows (not domestic), and warblers that they are safe "under our wing", we shall have gone a long way to save them from extinction.

Let each contestant make and hang out a bird-box near the feeding station, to induce the birds to become "box-minded". Birds do not catch on at once: I had a box out all last year and never a bird went near it. I have heard of bird lovers keeping a box out three years before they got a tenant; but once the birds make up their minds to "rent" it, it was used annually, and additional boxes were occupied, probably by the previous year's young. It is important that the box looks old and weathered, and it may be necessary to stain it to make it appear antique. Birds seem to be suspicious of new boxes.

WHEN SHALL WE TIRE OF NAMES?

We are so drunk with names, we naming ones, Reeling from stone to star, inebriate With flushed presumption—labeling men and suns. And all things else that names did not create;

We are so proud of names, we naming fools, Strutting in titled plumage, like puffed birds,

Using our names as shallow, glittering pools To mirror our vain selves in valuer words;

When shall we tire of names, we naming slaves, Renounce all earthly names, forget our own,

And with the wind, the inch-worm and the waves, Praise one Name ever, and one Name alone?

—Henry Morton Robinson, in The Commonwealth.

That little poem is a good text for a few remarks on nomenclature though there is much to be said in opposition and something in concordance. Our poet overlooks the fact that the "Great Original" first instituted names for all His creatures.

"And out of the ground the LORD GOD formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Genesis 2:19).

So early does the sacred writer recognize the importance of the subject. As people dispersed over the earth, the primitive names quite naturally became confused, or lost, or interchanged, and new ones were invented, until at last a confusion like to that of Babel came about. Science could make no advance till this was remedied. In the case of Botany, it was Carl von Linné (better known to us as Linnaeus) who came to the rescue, and gave to each plant an invariable generic and specific name, which he elected should be in Latin as a language universally understood. So convenient was this binomial system that it was speedily applied to all branches of natural science, except perhaps Astronomy, where the planets have but one name, although the fixed stars have two.

But just at this point one must agree with the poet. Classification is very necessary, but it is not the "be-all" and "end-all" of science. The life history of the species (plant or animal) is the object to concentrate upon—only, says Science, be sure what your species

The second verse of our poem stamps the writer as of that "sturdy democracy" which is said to hold titles in contempt. For the life of me I cannot see why a man who has done something in service of his fellows, should not be one whom the king delighteth to honor." Unscrupulous party leaders aforesaid have sold (or what amounted to that) titles of nobility in Britain; but such an outcry was raised that he would indeed be a bold man who should venture to repeat the act, and an inspection of the King's birthday list will show that every recipient is worthy of the honor conferred.

SKUNKS INCREASING

I was greatly pleased with a letter which reached me a few days ago; my correspondent brings together some interesting facts in the life history of the common skunk as reported to be on the Islands. In your "notes" of last week you mention the fact that the skunk is reported to be on the Island, and I am sorry to say the report is only too true. From the vicinity of Summerside, where it is said they first escaped or were let out of the ranches, they have spread to the eastward, all over Queen's County and even into King's County, in the last year or two. This animal is getting to be quite a scourge, on account of its fondness for eggs and chickens; a neighbor lost over one hundred chicks last year—the work of one skunk.

"Being nocturnal in their habits skunks are seldom seen during the day, and may be in the vicinity quite a while without being observed. They are fond of prowling round the shore and the eggs and young of our game and all ground nesting birds that they destroy, must run into very large numbers.

"Unfortunately there is no bounty on them as yet; but if every man and boy would take a little time at this season of the year, they could do a great deal to lessen the number of skunks, and thereby confer a benefit on the Province.

"Skunks, as a lot of folk may know, hibernate for a great part of the winter; but just at this season come out of their dens for a short time in the late evenings, now and again, generally on a mild night. After returning from their ramble, they may not show out again for a few nights or even weeks. So now, boys, if you see tracks in the fresh snow some morning—tracks that look somewhat like cat's tracks, but smaller and closer together—you may know that they were made by a skunk. Follow them for a little and you are sure to come to a hole in the snow and there Mr. Skunk has his den. I wouldn't advise you to dig him out: I tried that once.

"But get a piece of meat of any description—offal, chicken scrap or anything of that nature—put it near the hole and set a trap or two and you are likely to get him. A very good plan is to get an old barrel, cut a few little holes in it, and put the meat into it: this gets him going round the barrel as he smells the meat, and if you have set a few traps, you may get more than one. It might be just as well to take a gun with you when you visit your traps.

"A young Dane told me the other day that he had traps out for foxes and thought he'd caught a black one but could not see him very well under the bushes: he undertook to finish him with a stick but it turned out to be a skunk. "My, he strong," he said.

"So for the next few weeks if we all keep our eyes open and spend a little time around the woods and the sea shore, I am sure we will be able to diminish the skunk population, and have a little fun besides."

My correspondent gives a "jolly good wrinkle"—to set the skunks investigating the barrel and forgetting the trap. I have been told from other districts, that the skunks are destroying the eggs of the shore birds.

SEASONABLE HINTS STOPS

The last number of "Seasonable Hints" (Spring, 1932) intimates that owing to restricted appropriations, its publication will be discontinued. All farmers will regret this, for timely advice on all kinds of field and garden crops, as well as on live stock, were to be found in its pages.

The Eastern Editor of its last issue contains a short article on

Replies To Questions

BY GEORGE ENNIS SMITH, SUPERINTENDANT EXPERIMENTAL FOX RANCH, SUMMERSIDE

Question: Can you please tell me how to get cross foxes? I bought a female which was bred from a silver male and a red female. She is red. I crossed her to a black male and she raised six pups, three reds and three silvers. I bred two of the reds together, a brother and a sister, and I had one silver and two reds, but no crosses.

You cannot obtain what are known as cross foxes in the fur trade, but are known as patch foxes by fox breeders, by crossing red foxes and silver foxes. This female bred true according to the Mendelian law. The red is dominant and the silver recessive. Therefore, when you mate a red fox to a silver fox, whilst all the offsprings would be a cross between a red and silver, as the red is dominant, the offsprings would look like red foxes. This was the case with the red female that you bought. While she looked like a red fox, she was actually a cross between a red and a silver. According to the Mendelian law, if this red female was bred to a silver or a black male, on the average the offsprings from such a mating would be fifty per cent. silvers and fifty per cent. cross reds. Of course, the cross reds would look like reds and would sell as reds.

In your case it actually worked out according to probabilities and the six pups that she produced were, as you state, three reds and three silvers, but all those reds were cross reds. According to the Mendelian law, when two cross reds are bred together, on the average the offsprings produced would be one pure silver, two cross reds, and one pure red. In your case you state there was one silver and two reds. The silver would be a pure silver and would always breed true, just as much as if it had been bred from pure silver foxes for a number of generations and would not throw back to the red no more than any other silver fox. The two reds probably may have been two cross reds or they may have been one cross red and one pure red. If you wish to breed cross foxes and by that I understand that you want patch foxes, then you will have to obtain these by crossing two different varieties of silvers, an Alaskan with a Prince Edward Island or Yukon with Prince Edward Island or breeding from patch foxes.

Question: I have a female fox that must have fleas, as she is scratching herself all the time and has scratched out the fur around her neck. She did not show any signs of having fleas until about two weeks after she had mated. I am afraid to do anything with her as it might cause her to lose her pups. What treatment would you advise?

We would recommend you to leave this female entirely alone. It is very probable that she is not suffering in any way from flea infestation. At this time of the year we have often observed in the Experimental Fox Ranch that certain foxes on particular diets will be scratching themselves a great deal and as in your case would remove a large amount of the fur around the neck. We have examined these females very carefully but we have not found any evidence of fleas. It should be remembered that at this time of the year the fur starts to loosen particularly if the foxes have been improperly fed or with some particular breeds of foxes. This is undoubtedly premature as foxes should not lose their fur so early in the season, but it would cause a slight irritation and naturally the foxes would be scratching themselves a great deal. It is very probable in your case that the female has been scratching herself because the fur is starting to fall out and she is not infested with fleas so that there is no need for you to worry.

Question: A fox breeder has advised me to put tincture of iodine on the tails of my pups when they are one week old. I would like to know what you think about this? Several years ago the Experimental Fox Ranch was faced with the problem of pups losing their

tips and part of their tails before they were one month old and there was a large number of fox breeders inquiring from the Experimental Fox Ranch what they should do to counteract this trouble. Since that time we have been able to find out the cause of the trouble and ascertained that it was due to infantile scurvy, but in the early days of our investigation work we did not have that knowledge, and in reviewing this problem there appears to be two possibilities, one that it was due to some external mite, the other that it was due to poor circulation in the tail. It occurred to me that if it was either one or the other tincture of iodine might help to alleviate the condition. It would kill external parasites, also it would help to promote the circulation of the extremities of the tail. The majority of fox breeders are aware that in cases of sprains and bruises, very often the affected part is painted with tincture of iodine in order to stimulate the circulation. Therefore, we advise fox breeders to put some tincture of iodine on the tails of the pups the first time they were examined. We had also tested it out in our experimental work. We found and so did the majority of fox breeders that followed our recommendations that it did improve the condition in the tails and there was no doubt that it saved the tips in a large number of cases. Since we have found out as a result of our research work, that fox pups were losing their tips and part of the tails due to the fact that the diet produced infantile scurvy. One of the symptoms of scurvy is an impoverished circula-

tion and when there is not a proper circulation the extremities would be the first to suffer. With the fox pups, the tails would be the part most affected. While the best way to counteract tail trouble with the pups is to feed the foxes so that they will not acquire infantile scurvy, still it will help to paint the tails of the pups with tincture of iodine. In reply to this question we would recommend fox breeders to paint the tails of their pups when they are about one week old with tincture of iodine and to repeat the treatment each week until they are one month old and it would be just as well at the same time to paint the paws.

Question: What is the best time to wean pups? We would recommend fox breeders to wean their pups when they are seven weeks old. At that time the female begins to go dry and the pups can get very little nourishment from the mother. When the pups start to run around, the mother will invariably give an alarm call when the feeder or any one else approaches the pens, and as a natural instinct the pups rush to the nest and the longer the pups are left with the mother, the worse she becomes in this respect. The older the pups become the louder she gives the alarm call and the wilder the pups become. We have visited a large number of ranches where the pups have been left with the mothers. When anyone goes into the pens, the pups will rush around, jump up the wire and then fall down. In those ranches there is a number of pups suffer with broken limbs or hurting themselves in other ways.

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Wild foxes are hard to manage in captivity and it is not conducive to good results to have your ranch filled with wild and easily alarmed foxes.

In the Experimental Fox Ranch we have made a practice of weaning the pups when they are six or seven weeks old and as a result the pups are very tame. There is still another aspect on this question. The mother, while she is left with the pups, will starve herself for the sake of her offspring and it is very liable to undermine her condition for the next breeding season. In reply to this question we would advise fox breeders to wean their pups when they are seven weeks old, as the pups will be tamer and easier to manage and it will also give the female a better chance to get into condition for the next breeding season.

Question: How much meat should be fed to puppies from birth until six or seven months old? We would recommend that the pups should be fed with some vegetables and cereals. For that reason it is not advisable to feed meat to the vixen after the pups are three weeks old as in the majority of cases, she will carry it in to the pups which will lead to indigestion and other ill effects with the pups. When the pups are one month old we would recommend that each pup should receive daily one ounce of ground meat; when they are two months old, three ounces, four months old, four ounces, five months old, five ounces and six months old, six ounces, but not to increase the

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"Two Years ago I'd have said it Couldn't be Done"

WALTER P. CHRYSLER TELLS ABOUT HIS NEW PLYMOUTH



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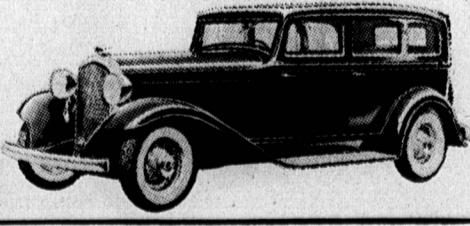
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