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**TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox and Mink Farming**

We are indebted to Dr. C.K. Gunn, Superintendent Experimental Fox Ranch, Summerside, for the following very timely article. Because of our limited space we have to cut it down somewhat but the basic parts are intact—

**A PROGRAM OF IMPROVED BREEDING IS URGENTLY NEEDED IN THE CANADIAN FOX RANCHING INDUSTRY**

Canadian fox ranchers should place particular emphasis upon the production of high quality pelts because the greatest demand in the markets of the world will always be for clear-colored, fine, dense furs.

The present period of low pelt values is an opportune time for Canadian fox ranchers to rigidly cull their flocks with a view to the production of a better quality fox pelt in the future. This, however, can only be produced by careful attention to the many individual details necessary to the successful raising of fur bearers under the semi-domesticated conditions of the fur ranch.

Too strong emphasis, therefore, cannot be suggested for a program of improved selection and breeding methods in the Canadian fox ranching industry. This entails a detailed study of desirable fur traits and careful attention to the selection of breeding stock. In the choice of foundation stock, foxes should be examined not only for desirable fur characters, but a careful study should be made of the blood line for desirable ancestry and prepotency.

The individuality of a fox is determined from a knowledge of its conformation, mating record and the fur characters. The following attributes in the selection of desirable foxes should be carefully studied: Specific Fur Characters: Good color in underfur should be insisted upon. Length of both guard and underfur coupled with density of these make for a tightly furled pelt that will stand up well when the leather is tanned. Density: Density is dressed. The silver should have a long or wide bar and be sharply defined in the silvered regions of the pelt. The fur should be strong in texture, with enough veiling to give the pelt character, but not such that it covers or dulls the silver. The animal should be well furred all over, with strong furled back, sides and rump. The neck should be full with jowls and throat well silvered in the full silver fox. The silver should carry down to a narrow black belly strip.

Size: Length and girth of the animal are important. Together these measurements determine the size of the pelt. Large pelts are superior in value to smaller pelts of equal quality. In this respect, it is important to mate large animals in order to obtain large sized pups, which often are mated to be expected in turn to give rise to offspring of larger size than average. If small animals and large animals are mated together progeny may be obtained in which only a few years is a large size character. Watch inbreeding for any loss of size, because some crosses involving close inbreeding will produce a decrease in size. If size is becoming less in a herd or on the quickest method to overcome this is to outcross. Hybrid vigor will thus be introduced which will cover up this defect in most cases.

Foundry: The ability to reproduce young of good numbers for a period of years is a trait which should be taken into consideration in the choice of vixens for breeders. Litter size in vixens is determined by the number of eggs they make available for fertilization when they are mated to fertile males. The male fox, if he in turn is selected from a large litter and found another, will also transmit this tendency for large litter size to his offspring.

Mating Vigor: Male foxes should be selected for the ability to desire to mate readily. Poor maters may be used and a few litters obtained, but if pups from these litters are kept, then the character of poor mating ability may be transmitted into the herd. Artificial insemination may through time be employed successfully, but in case of naturally poor maters, this weakness would only be spread through the herd instead of eliminating it.

Color: Desirable color should be particularly stressed in the selection of animals for breeding purposes. A clear blue black color is very important in the guard fur, and it should be free from rusty tinges or the hereditary tendency for this defect. Clear underfur, free from off color, with a uniform color from bottom to top is desirable. Among shed protected animals receiving a good amount of ration, some strains of foxes will still show a rusty effect in the fur, which in such cases is hereditary in origin. The most rigid method for selection of good color is to retain only those animals that keep or hold their color well throughout the year in outdoor pens, they will generally retain good color anywhere, and will usually transmit this character to their offspring.

Avoid the selection of foxes with curly or wavy fur. This tendency is inherited and because such pelts are difficult to match in garments, they are considered undesirable. Such curly furred pelts are of less value than smoothly furred skins of equal quality in other respects.

Avoid selecting V necked animals. The silver should not cross the back of the fox at right angles to the long axis of the body and the black coloration caused by absence of silver should not run down the center of the back in a V or U shape. Such pelts are generally considered undesirable.

Select vixens from good milking strains. Foxes, like cows, are variable as to their milking ability and a good milking vixen usually produces strong growthy pups that will in turn milk well. Poor milkers are a cause of small size fox pups and even losses among litters.

Quiet temperament is another trait that should be taken into consideration in the choice of breeding stock. Tame animals which bark at the least provocation should be avoided. Such excitable vixens are usually the ones that destroy their young when any unusual noises or happenings occur in the ranch about whelping time.

All breeding animals should be selected with an eye to good breeding conformation. Male foxes should have a wide chest with good girth or a spring of rib, and possess a large barrel with plenty of length. The female should be of good size with large barrel and wide across the hip region.

Good eaters: Foxes that are not too nervous are usually good feeders, and such animals are usually easy to keep in good condition. Unless such foxes have particularly outstanding fur qualities they should be eliminated from the ranch breeding stock.

In purchasing of new breeding stock for the ranch, beware of purchasing prize winners at fox shows. A large number of the spectacular foxes are of a type of chance genetic constitution and are often mongrels for many of the good traits which go to make up the ancestry of foxes. Breeding results from such animals are, therefore, often not only costly but very disappointing when their progeny are examined the following year.

Famous breeders of other lines of stock who consistently produce outstanding animals are careful not to introduce new blood into their breed line until they have determined whether or not it will "mix" with the desirable characters of their own stock. Often the champion show fox does not "mix" with the foxes of the ranch where it is introduced and the result is even detrimental to the quality of the progeny in that ranch.

Although this was not written to sponsor registration of stock, nevertheless, it is only through the medium of carefully registered foxes that a rancher is enabled to study the ancestry of an outstanding animal that he may hope to introduce into his ranch. From the pedigree he can determine whether or not the particular fox is the product of a blood line which for generations before has been producing highly desirable type of offspring.

Therefore, in order that Canadian fox ranchers may compete favorably in world markets of the future with high quality fox pelts, they will do well to clean house during the present period and—

(1) Rigidly cull their present day herds using the points enumerated in the selection of desirable foxes.

(2) Make a careful study of blood lines and pedigrees before building up their ranches.

When a fox rancher is familiar with the ideal type of animals after which he hopes to model his herd, he is then confronted with the problem of which is the best breeding method to use in order to achieve that end. The answer to this important question is—a program of inbreeding!

Inbreeding may be defined as a modified form of inbreeding in which the inbreeding is directed toward concentration of the desirable hereditary characters of chiefly one outstanding ancestor—usually an outstanding sire. However, as a result of the inbreeding in this system of mating foxes there are usually some undesirable characters brought to the surface along with the concentration of the good traits.

Therefore, because inbreeding concentrates any bad traits present as well as the good ones, it is very essential to cull out undesirable types in each successive generation. Accordingly, after a few generations of inbreeding these undesirable hereditary traits can be largely eliminated from the stock and a very uniform herd of the desired type can be obtained.

Another factor resulting from the inbreeding practiced in a pro-

**- NEWSY NOTES -**

By Agricol

**The Semipalmated Plover**

This little Plover, often called the "Ringneck" resembles the Killdeer to a considerable extent, but is smaller and its neck has but one dark ring instead of two. These Plovers haunt beaches and coastal mud flats, in association with the front half a dozen to half a hundred. In his Birds of P. E. I., Francis Sain remarks: "The Ringneck Plover - - is the first to return from the North, becoming common in August. Indeed, some few individuals rest here, about lonely shores and islands. I have seen them on the beach at St. Peter's Island. The color is dark ash-brown with a black ring on the breast. It nests in a grassy spot on the marsh and lays four speckled gray eggs."

**The Planet Jupiter**

On a clear evening just now, one sees a bright star almost due south and about 30 degrees up from the horizon. It does not twinkle, so it is a planet, and its size, brightness, and color tell us that it is Jupiter. On Friday, July 18th, the Moon was approaching Jupiter, and was to be in conjunction at 20 hours 11 minutes on the 17th. Will that bring rain? On many occasions the conjunction has done so, and perhaps that was why the Romans used the word "pluvius"—rain—to distinguish Jupiter, the planet of the solar family. Its diameter is more than eleven times that of the earth, and the planet itself is so great that it could contain more than 1,300 bodies of the size of the earth, according to the astronomers.

No telescope, no matter how big, can show us anything of Jupiter's surface, for it is screened by a very extensive atmosphere, which is, probably, very deep also. The huge bulk of the atmosphere and the nimble molecules of hydrogen and adds them to the planet's atmosphere. Jupiter revolves on its axis once in about 10 hours—a very short day!—and the rapid motion has drawn the clouds into parallel belts, of different hues. There are also spots, bright or dark, to be seen, whose origin is a mystery.

Jupiter has satellites to spare! It has eleven moons. Some of our comic-strip heroes have journeyed to Jupiter, but their sojourn must have been uncomfortable, with the thermometer standing at 200 degrees below freezing point!

**Early Lecture on Late Blight**

When the British people—and I mean the North Britons too—began first to seek culture, the public lecture sprang into being. For a few centuries ago could imbibed great thoughts presented by great thinkers. Mechanics! In stitute flourished, where one might be made cognizant of "Eggs in the Nests" one week, and "Hydrations of Narcosis" the next. Sometimes the lecturer aimed to amuse rather than educate, and sometimes he did it without precisely intending to. Possibly this lecture of the cell, reported by Professor Dr. Mike Hill, advertised away back in 1946, was in the latter category. This, it will be noted, was just a year after the terrible famine in Ireland, caused by the "potato disease."

When the curtain went up Professor Dr. Mike Hill was revealed sitting at table, helping himself generously to roast beef and potatoes washed down by copious draughts of beer. Quite unaccounted he finished his repast and stepped forward to the footlights, his hat in one hand and a huge shillelagh in the other, and was received with rapturous applause of cheering. "Here," says the Advertiser, "is an outline of his speech."

"You're all here, I see, gentlemen, you equate me, and I assure you I'm very happy on any occasion for to see you here along with me this night, to express to you the potato disease—(loud applause)—also I wish in no amiable anything, that you'll challenge me tomorrow—(applause)—or tonight—(applause)—or the next day. (Applause). Now, gentlemen, in regard to our long-lost friend (i.e., the potato disease) it'll give you the cause of the disease, that is, how it comes—(applause)—that is, how it comes—(applause)—that is, how it comes—(applause). For, gentlemen, my equals and others, in regard to the favorite root of Ireland, and of England, and the Highlands of Scotland, all the gentlemen are fully entitled to back a man of my appearance—(applause)—a native of a profession—a professional naturalist. (Great applause). Now and about the potato disease, and how they're planted, the farmers, you see, narrow them down with their young tubers, and then they put on the brake harrow and destroy their natural promiscuous order. (Applause). The farmer has himself to blame, for he ploughs them from, and then he ploughs them in (to), and then puts on a double-ripped plough, and then he harrows over the tender shoots and breaks them, and then he puts the young shoots (plants, properly trees), and then covered up in this way, they're destroyed by the fungus heat—(great applause)—till it's so tender that in the first or second

gram of inbreeding, is that of "prepotency". This important attribute of inbred stock is the ability of such an animal to impress its type, upon its progeny which assists a rancher to obtain fox pups of the type he desires. In short, there is much greater chance of a inbred fox producing its kind, when it is introduced to grade up a ranch, than if a mongrel fox of equally outstanding appearance were used.

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