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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Mink Raising Costs Are Cut

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CUTTING PRODUCTION costs is the goal of every producer these days and I find that George MacNeill has achieved marked success in his mink farming operation at Morell. While most other P.E.I. mink men have reduced their ranches and some have abandoned the operation, Mr. MacNeill is expanding.

There are several reasons, but I was particularly interested in his feeding formula. Fish which he gets at Souris for one and one-half cents a pound make up 75 percent of his diet, but he cuts his costs still further by adding lard and reducing consumption.

"I cut the feed intake 50 percent by introducing 4 percent of pure lard into the mixture," he told me. If 1,000 mink consume 750 pounds of food, the lard addition will cut it to 500 pounds, or 8 ounces per mink, he reports. Adding the lard satisfies the animals with that much less food intake, he explains. And "mink will not thrive" if they are hungrily roaming around their pens.

THE FOOD cost situation here contrasts sharply with the Denver operation where they truck fish 2300 miles across the Rocky Mountains from Oregon, at a cost of 6 ½ cents per pound, he explained.

Some minkmen who were formerly fox ranchers feed red meat. The fox is a member of the dog family and needs it. But the mink is a member of the weasel family and they are fish eaters, he explained. He does feed some liver but the fish accounts for most of the feed. Fish at 1½ cents per pound compares with horse meat at 14 to 15 cents in cost.

Big Ranch Is Interested

INCIDENTALLY large ranchers elsewhere are interested in the low-cost fish food for mink. Chicago's Northwood Fur Farms, the largest in the world Mr. MacNeill tells me, with 40,000 pelts annually - wants three-quarters of a million pounds in the current furring season. But Mr. MacNeill doubts that it could be landed there at a cost that would be economically feasible. The stuff would have to be frozen and moved in refrigerated transport, he explains. But it does emphasize the interest that his operations have stirred in mink centers elsewhere.

Mr. MacNeill flew 800 females here last January from his Whitbourne, Newfoundland ranch. He was planning expansion to 1500 females when I talked to him a month ago, and a more recent chat disclosed his idea of importing 1,000 females from the MacNeill Denver ranch.

THE MORELL rancher told me the Denver shipment would depend on whether duty costs would make the move feasible. I don't know what he may have decided, but a

talk yesterday with the Customs office here left me feeling the cost might be too high. There is no duty on breeding mink, but the pens and other equipment appear to be a different matter.

I asked him about a quote that P.E.I. is "the best location in North America for producing good mink".

"Your damp climate produces a thick, thick fur", he observed and added "Your foxes were the best in the world. The Hudson's Bay Company will tell you that" the rest depends on management, he explained.

A newspaper story in these papers recently said that the MacNeills - George is associated with his brother John, who was born in Southport - have achieved better results in production and quality here to date than they have in any of their other ranching operations.

New Sire Is Son Of Royal Champ

GORDON MATHESON, Hunter River has purchased a young sire from Ernie Himmelman, LaHave, Nova Scotia that should improve his fine herd of Hereford cattle. The new whiteface is by Whittern National Velvet, last years grand champion at the Royal Winter Fair, and an outstanding animal in his own right..

I've mislaid the information I had on him but memory tells me that, at \$10,000, he was the highest price Hereford bull that ever came this way. I know that Mr. Himmelman refused several tempting offers for the Royal Grand champion because he wanted to retain him for Maritime breed improvement.

The LaHave breeder will be remembered by all who took in the Hereford field day and tour here last year. His "cattle caller" which he had mounted on his car provided more fun than anything else during the day. It sounded more like an old siren or a moose caller, than a cow, but it brought herds running to the road anytime he tried it out en route from one farm to another.

THE THING proved useful when the party arrived at Hereford farms. The cars drove into the pasture field and the cattle caller did the rest. Usually they ended up in a semi-circle around the front of the string of cars that were carrying the visitors.

Lowell Wyand's cattle at Cavendish were the lone exceptions. They came close several times but their natural suspicion must have overcome their curiosity, for his Herefords invariably ran away from the visitors before they could get a look at the herd.

One of the newer Hereford breeders, Gordon Matheson has been making rapid strides in the past few years. If the sire lives up to what his new owner hopes, he should be a big asset to the Hunter River herd.

Close Voting Is Predicted

WITH SCARCELY a week left in the byelection campaigns in 5th Kings and 2nd Queens, I get the feeling that close finishes are in store in both ridings. I get that by balancing the predictions of the Liberals against the Conservatives, and trying to add up the result.

Most Liberals I meet, keep telling me that George Kitson is going to win handily in 2nd Queens while I find PCs to whom I talk more hesitant about predicting a win for their man, Lloyd MacPhail.

The PCs seem more hopeful in 5th Kings where veteran Leslie Hunter, Bridgetown, who tells me he is in the district and has a vote there, is running against newcomer George Ferguson of Murray River.

I FIND most Liberals pretty confident about Ferguson although there is a feeling on both sides, apparently, that personal and sympathy votes that will probably go to Hunter, who lost on a voting technicality last time, could be enough to elect him if the battle is close.

I met George Ferguson at Montague this year when National Liberal Leader Lester B. Pearson spoke at Montague in the Kings byelection campaign, and I think he is one of the most promising young men to carry a Liberal standard for a long time.

But you have to balance his energy and drive in an area where he was not known previously against the respect and experience which Mr. Hunter has built among the people over the years. Either could win by a hundred votes, but I'd hate to be betting my last dollar on it.

One PC friend whose predictions I often find are sound, suggests there may very well be a win for his party in the Georgetown district and a Liberal win in 2nd Queens. As I've said, it could be close.