

NEWSY NOTES

By J. A. Clark, D.Sc.

Wild White Clover

The growing season of 1952 has been outstanding for clover throughout Prince Edward Island. There is a general belief among farmers that every crop following a good crop of clover will greatly benefit, not only from the nitrogen stored in the nodules that form on the clover roots, but from the improved soil conditions because of the amount of humus that the clover roots leave in the soil.

Pastures were better during the spring and summer, than we can recall in the last fifty years. Their condition was greatly enhanced by the abundant growth of wild white clover. Trifolium repens, a small white-blossomed clover that is indigenous in our lawns, pastures and meadows. That is, it comes everywhere without being seeded when conditions are favorable for its growth. This wonderful provision of nature to perpetuate certain plants has been observed for generations. Recent investigations have furnished concrete evidence that indicate how legumes, such as alfalfa and clovers, frequently appear in lawns and meadows years after these areas have been known to have been seeded to clover.

Germination tests of clover seed often prove very disappointing. A large percentage of the seeds placed in a germinator for a seven day test, which is normal for cereals, may show that only from 10 to 20 per cent of the seeds have shown any sign of sprouting. It is true that a pound of white clover seed contains an enormous number of seeds, because the seeds are very small, and for this reason two or more pounds of wild white clover seed may produce enough plants to give a good stand of clover. The question in the minds of many farmers has been: Why did the other seed not grow? Why do white clover and some other plants appear years later on fields that were once seeded with clover? The answer seems to be "Hard Seeds."

Hard Seeds The term, hard seeds, applies to seeds that have a seed coat impervious to water. One of the clovers known for years to have such a hard seed coat was sweet clover, Melilotus officinalis. With this clover it was nearly always necessary to scarify the seed in order to get a good stand. Different methods were used whereby a sand blast was used or the seed was blown or rubbed against sharp sand paper. In mechanical scarification, care had to be taken not to injure the germ in the seed. The use of acids or alkalis to soften the hard seed coat was also tried.

A very large proportion of the seeds of white clover have hard seed coats. These seeds are more impervious than those of red clover or alfalfa. In a test recently completed, where seed was gathered from a three acre field in 1938, it was found that the amount of seed in the heads of white clover varied from 8 to 176 per head. Seeds from 100 heads were placed in a seed incubator in March 1939, on seed germination blotters. They were moistened in the same manner as for all clover germination tests: they were counted and recorded at the end of seven days, the regular test period, and all seedlings and seeds that had softened or decayed were removed. Only hard seeds were left on the moist test blotters in the germinator. From time to time during a 12 year period, the seedlings and any decayed seeds were counted and removed.

Results of Tests The average number of white clover seeds that germinated in seven days was 15.42 per cent of those tested. The average number that were germinated during the 12 year period was 25.79 per cent. At the end of the above test in 1951 the hard seeds remaining were nicked by a special scalpel that cut through the hard seed coat so that moisture could enter and start germination. They were then placed back in the germinator and at the end of five days over 50 per cent of these that had hard coats germinated, making a total germination in the course of the 12 year test of over 77 per cent. For one cause or another nearly 23 per cent of the seeds decayed.

White clover seeds frequently collect on lawn mowers and a test of these resulted in 18 per cent of these germinating with 73 per cent of hard seeds remaining, with nine per cent dead or immature. This indicated that 91 per cent of the white clover seeds collected from the lawn mower were viable.

There are many possible ways in which wild white clover may be distributed throughout the country. In cured hay there are often many mature heads of white clover. Animals on pasture eating ripe heads of white clover would leave hard seeds in their droppings wherever they went. Seed eating birds might well be carriers of hard seeds. Lawn mowers and the cuffs of men's trousers frequently carry white clover seeds.

So many volunteer wild white clover plants appear everywhere throughout the country from year to year that we speak of this clover as being indigenous. We believe this is because of the large percentage of hard seeds produced by it.

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TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox and Mink Farming

The House of Aronowicz, New York, has reopened its Paris workrooms where it will reproduce fur garments shown by Hubert DeGivinchy. Mr. Aronowicz, who recently returned to New York from Paris, said the Givinchy models would be shown in New York in October. He predicts a good market for mink in European countries. Mink have been so greatly developed in the United States, he says, that it is inevitable that another prestige fur must come forward and mink will slip into place as a fashionable and desirable fur in the less exclusive brackets. Since production of mink has been so greatly increased it will be necessary to find new markets for it and I believe this can be done in European countries where mink coat is still a precious rarity. The newcomer in prestige furs in Mr. Aronowicz's opinion will be broad-tail. He believes it fits in with the feeling for suppler silhouettes and the American need for not-too-heavy garments in interurban areas where women wear their furs indoors or in cars as much as they do outdoors.

Offerings of ranch mink were 94 per cent sold at the Edmonton Fur Auction Sales, Ltd. last week. Prices advanced 5 per cent. Males brought \$16 to \$21, females \$8.50 to \$9.50 and ones and twos and assorted sizes sold from \$9 to \$11. Silverfox platinum mink all sold at an advance of 15 per cent; interbred male and female, medium colors sold from \$16 to \$23; off-colors sold from \$5 to \$12. Muskrats were 86 per cent sold slightly easier, extra large and large heavy types \$1.80 to \$2.15. Extra large and large lighter weight, \$1.45 to \$1.80. Other poorer types sold from \$1.20 to \$1.40, .85 to .96 cents, and damaged .60 to .80 cents.

A market report from New York states that mink pelts are almost gone and a high active market expected through fall. As in the 1951 mink crop nears depletion there were fewer sales during the month of July and offerings were light and in good demand at all auctions. The big breeders' marketing associations report that they have already sold nearly all the skins produced by their members and these associations are now mostly interested in contracts for the coming season with the various auction companies. With no hold over from this season the trade is optimistic for an active market for the 1952 pelts which will start coming to marketing centres in December.

At present there is every indication that there will be no recession in mink prices between now and the new season. Of great interest to the New York City trade is the first offering of the Ruby-Eyed Pastel Mink. This interest has been stimulated by excellent editorial promotion in fashion magazines. The Mutation Mink Breeders' Association reports that offerings of EMBA Topaz (the trade market name of the Ruby-Eye) will be light. Estimates from various sources on the number of pelts to be offered at the initial sale range from 1,500 to 3,500. The first sale will be held in New York in December, 1952 or January, 1953, depending upon the pricing.

Little of an encouraging nature can be reported in the market for silver foxes. There is still stored a large number of pelts from past years which have been a drag on the market. More and more fox breeders have gone out of business or converted their ranches to breeding mink, but there are some who feel confident that eventually those few breeders who have kept foxes will reap a reward. On encouraging feature is that silver fox and its color phases are being more and more used for trimming cloth coats.

The first consignment of whale meat ever imported from Norway landed in Boston July 1st. It was brought in to supply the wants of mink breeders in the eastern states. At one time we thought there would be quite a lot of whale meat brought into this province from Newfoundland, but the decline in the fox population has prevented that. Mink breeders here have found sufficient horse meat to supply them and it is not likely that with the limited number of fur-bearing animals raised here now that will be necessary to import whale meat.

J. Richard Murray has been appointed vice president in charge of operations of Lamson, Fraser & Huth, New York City. Prior to coming to New York he has been associated with Hudson's Bay Company for a number of years. Mr. Murray takes the place of George H. Mayers, who resigned June 30th as executive vice president of Lamsons. We have not heard anything lately about George's plans but no doubt he has something big in view or he would not have resigned his well-paid position with Lamson's. George was a great asset to that organization because he was indefatigable and thought nothing of travelling to the western United States or Western Canada, then returning to Prince Edward Island or any other part of Canada or the United States. By his very friendly manner and his great knowledge of fur-bearing animals he built up a goodwill for Lamson's that brought a tremendous amount of business to them. We hope wherever he goes that he will be very successful.

Indoor Judging—the story behind the new lighting system is the subject of an article in the Black Fox Magazine. The first fur show to be judged by artificial light was the 1950 Michigan International Fur Animal Show at Michigan State College, where a newly developed artificial lighting system was used to judge the animals. Over a million dollars worth of fur-bearers were inspected on the first day because this artificial north skylight permitted the judges to work until early evening whereas they normally would have stopped at 3:30 p.m. because of the falling natural daylight. The new lighting system named the Mituba Noctile, was the result of months of research and development carried on by the lighting division of the Outdoor Edison Company and the lighting committee of the Michigan Fur Breeders' Association. As a result of the experiments it took quite a time and cost a considerable amount of money before light was developed that permitted judging under conditions equally as good, if not better, than normal light, and this year this system will be used in many mink shows throughout the United States.

A wire from George A. Callbeck, who is attending the auctions in Montreal, is as follows: "Fox catlogue mainly unsold. Ranch mink standards 72 percent sold advanced 10 percent. Pastels all sold. Silverblu 86 percent sold. Both types in good demand."

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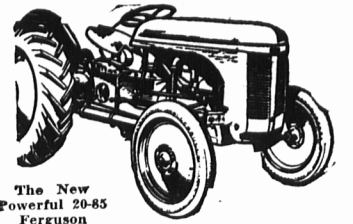
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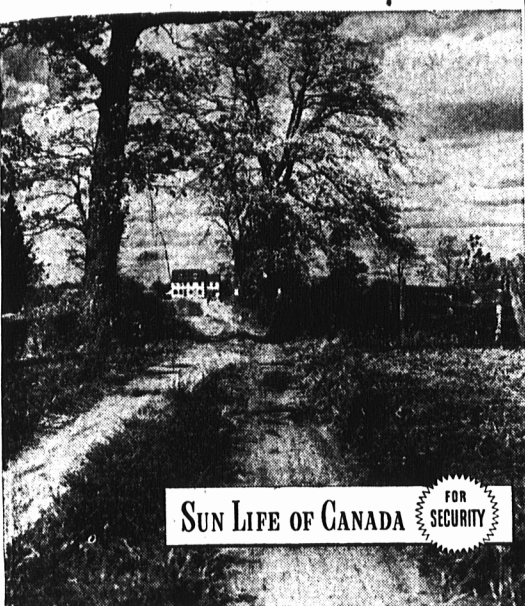
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