

NEWSY NOTES

By J. A. Clark, D.Sc.

Domesticated Earthworms

Earthworms which have been developed by selective breeding and feeding methods under a controlled environment are described as "domesticated". There are many hundreds of species of earthworms grouped by Zoologists in the order Phylum annelida. The Latin word annellus (a ring), graphically describes the family, as their bodies are formed by a series of muscular rings closely woven together to form a tube

of themselves in almost any climate.

Earthworms And General Farming

Dr. G. S. Oliver tells how his grandfather Mr. George Sheffield, maintained his farm of 100 acres in Northern Ohio for 60 years with ever increasing fertility. The outstanding feature of this farm was the compost pit in the center of the barnyard, it was 50 ft. by 100 ft. and excavated to a depth of 2 ft. Mr. Sheffield followed stock raising and mixed farming; he overwintered about 300 head of stock. The heart of his farming technique was the compost pit. He attributed his unvarying success as a farmer to the utilization of earthworms in maintaining and building the fertility of his land. The building of the compost heap was a daily routine.

The manure from the horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry was spread evenly over the pit as taken from the stables and pens. There was an ice pond with a fine textured red clay bottom at a higher level than the pit so that water from it could be used to moisten the compost as needed. It was emptied from time to time and several tons of clay scraped from the bottom and piled where it was available for use to add a clay layer, composed of this clay and the scrapings from the entire barnyard, that was spread over the manure when the compost was about one foot in depth.

Earthworms Were Propagated

The compost pit was never completely stripped and this "mother substance" containing thousands of earthworms and egg capsules to repopulate the pit was spread evenly over the entire surface as a new compost was started. The earthworms multiplied by the millions. They worked the soil and the manure over and converted the whole mass into a dark fertile crumbly soil substance, that had to be removed and handled with shovels, when spring planting was underway. By that time all odor of manure had disappeared, so that it smelled like fresh turned earth. The material from the compost, as it was spread on the fields was quickly plowed under so that as many as possible of the earthworms might survive. The garden and orchard received their share from the compost. Mr. Sheffield said: "Never disturb the soil under a tree. The earthworm is the best plow for a tree and I do not want them disturbed."

Breeding And Selection

Dr. Thomas J. Barrett in his book "Harnessing the Earthworms" tells how Dr. George S. Oliver succeeded in crossing the rainworm and the manure worm. He made selections from about a thousand hybrids and found that when these were mated, they produced fertile eggs. After continuing this work for five years he found that his domesticated hybrid had the following desirable characteristics: It is a prolific breeder; a high percentage of the capsules are fer-

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These very valuable characteristics would warrant a beginner in earthworm culture to start with the domesticated variety, as they are sure to be prolific and will adapt themselves to all sorts of food and soil. One man reported that he started with 250 earthworm egg-capsules and in two years had 500,000 breeders in his culture bed.

Not Expensive

Dr. Barrett suggests that: "those who desire to make a start in earthworm culture" should "secure an adequate supply of domesticated earthworm egg capsules, or a culture of domesticated earthworms, and go to work." After all is said, the main expense in soil building is the time and labor spent. Once earthworm culture is established, the small initial investment of money in making a right start is soon absorbed in increased land values, increased production, and increased living satisfaction". Always remember that the earthworm is a "Master builder" of topsoil, and the farmer's most dependable ally.

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox and Mink Farming



The annual meeting of the Canadian National Silver Fox Breeders Association was held in the Laurentian Hotel on Monday, June 18th, with President Gordon MacMillan of Cornwall, P. E. I. presiding. The financial report showed the Association to be in a strong position with investments in stocks, bonds and real estate. Liabilities were nil. The statement covering the operations of the marketing department for the previous year was not presented at this time as a final statement of government contract had not been completed. The membership by provinces showed Prince Edward Island considerably in the lead with Ontario second, Quebec third, Nova Scotia fourth and New Brunswick fifth. Registrations were some 200 less than the previous year. Up to June 1st, 115 ranch statements had been filed and accepted listing 1,500 males and 3,016 females. Live fox shows were held November, 1950, by the Maritime Winter Fair, the Prince Edward Island Fur Breeders Association and the Ontario Fur Breeders Association and grants paid to each according to the number of registered foxes exhibited. The Directors cooperated with the fur farm advertising committee on behalf of its shippers in making a deduction of one per cent from the sale of their furs, said deduction to be used by the committee in the advertising of furs, etc.

Since the last meeting of the Association two former directors, namely, Capt. John L. Read of Borden, P. E. I., and George E. Brown of Charlottetown, had passed away. Regret was also expressed at the passing at a comparatively early age of Mrs. La Forest, wife of Dr. J. E. LaForest, who had served on the board of directors for a number of years. Sympathy was tendered to the families, relatives and friends of the deceased.

A very complete report was tendered by the marketing committee which showed a total pelt receipts for the season of 10,113. On the whole the quality of fox pelts received was relatively good, the large proportion of inferior pelts consigned in years past appears to have been to a large extent eliminated as the result of economic pressure which forced out the production of lower grade pelts.

The quantity of mink pelts received by the marketing department was relatively small and this was regrettable as the facilities existed to give the mink rancher a superior service in the marketing of his pelts. In this respect it may be stated that the manager of the fur marketing department, George A. Callbeck, is a regular attendant at all the auctions and devotes a great deal of time with experts to the careful grading of both fox and mink pelts and gives them the closest observation at the auctions.

D. O. Stewart, chairman of the special committee, tendered the report of the committee which the past year consisted of G. A. Callbeck, J. J. McCague, with J. A. Couture and J. L. Simond added in an advisory capacity. The amount received by the committee from deductions by the marketing committee was much smaller than previous years. Mr. Stewart gave a splendid account of the activities of the committee in advertising and passed around a brochure with reproductions of young ladies wearing silver fox, platinum and pearl platinum fox, natural mink and mutation mink in capes, etc. This is considered the finest booklet of the kind ever put out and many of the photographs will be reproduced in high class fashion magazines. He also showed photographs of the Canadian Fur Farm Advertising Committee's display at international fairs where they made a great impression.

Twin Calves Dropped By Champlon Cow



Shown above are the twin calves, male and female dropped recently by Abegweit Milady, world champion cow owned by Premier J. Walter Jones. The photo was taken at Dr. Jones' Bunbury farm. The calves were the ninth and tenth from the famous cow, which herself is now ten years old.

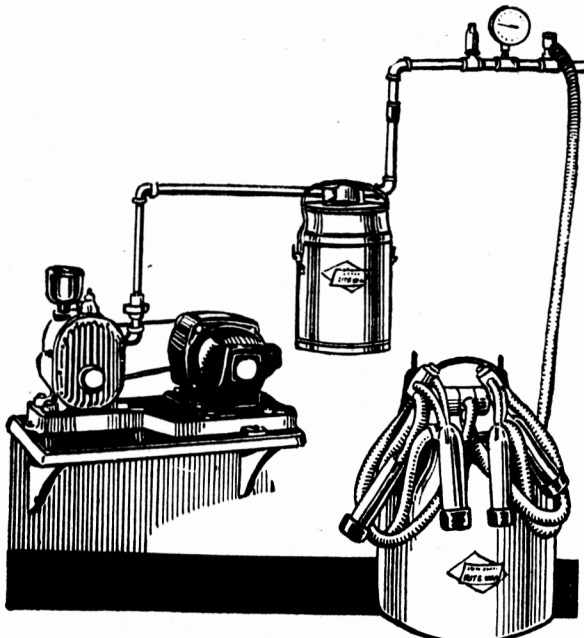
A pleasing part of the afternoon program was the unexpected arrival of Mayor Camilien Houde, who said that his secretary had informed him that the Canadian National Silver Fox Breeders were meeting in the hotel and he wished to welcome them on behalf of Canada's largest city and one of the earliest—if not the earliest—to trade in furs on this continent. He spoke of the great men who had lived in Montreal and engaged in the fur traffic. These included James McGill, the founder of McGill University. He said even today Montreal is a great fur trading centre as will be noted by the fact that the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Fur Auction Company and others, handle many millions of dollars worth of peltries annually. A vote of thanks was tendered the Mayor by Colonel D. A. MacKinnon, seconded by D. O. Stewart and passed unanimously, and His Worship went away as pleased with his visit as were the foxmen who were present to greet him.

A proposed plan for the classification of foxes was introduced by D. O. Stewart. It would give ranchers an opportunity to apply for this classification and an inspector would be sent out by the Association to examine the foxes submitted and to class them either as excellent, good, fair or undesirable. The minimum fee for each applicant would be \$15.00 up to and including fifteen foxes, and from the 16 to the 50 fox, 50 cents additional fee and over fifty, 25 cents. The inspection would be made at a time satisfactory to the Association's inspection branch. Mr. Stewart said there were a number of ranchers who were not satisfied with their own appraisal of a fox's quality and desire the opinion of an expert. It was felt that in this way better herds would be built up and less undesirable foxes kept. There was no compulsion about the matter, it was purely voluntary. After a lot of discussion the plan was adopted.

The election of directors who had been recommended by their provincial associations resulted as follows: Dr. W. E. Russell, Kitchener, Ont.; H. A. Doherty, Quebec; F. George MacLeod, New Brunswick; Gordon MacMillan, Charlottetown, and Ernest Mill, Mill's Point; H. Anderson, Cochrane, Alberta. The remaining directors which had been elected previously are A. M. Doyle, Manitoba; Russell Hood and Harry Zimmerman, Ont.; Allen Hooker, Quebec; C. B. Sherwood, N.B.; Walter P. Lusby, N.S.; and Lt.-Col. D. A. MacKinnon, R. S. Humphrey, L. W. Hancock, D. O. Stewart and E. S. Burleigh, P. E. I. The election of a president resulted in Dr. W. E. Russell succeeding Gordon MacMillan; Vice President, E. S. Burleigh. A pleasing function followed in which a presentation of a beautiful watch was made to Mr. MacMillan and a complimentary address given by Dr. Russell in which Mr. MacMillan was thanked for his very great services to the Association extending over a number of years.

The executive committee is as follows: R. S. Humphrey, F. G. MacLeod, Col. D. A. MacKinnon; Registration committee, C. B. Sherwood, H. A. Doherty, L. W. Hancock and the president and vice-president. A delegate to the Live Stock Association, J. J. McCague. Representatives to the Royal Winter Fair, H. Zimmerman, W. H. Ruthven, Fair Committee; This will consist of the executive with Ernest Mill, Chief Inspector, and Manager, George A. Callbeck. Grants to live fox shows were passed, similarly to other years. A committee consisting of D. O. Stewart and George A. Callbeck with Lowell Hancock as an alternate, was appointed to attend the International Fur Conference if held this fall in the United States. It was also decided to continue the advertising grants which had been voted a couple of years previously but had not been used. This sum is \$15,000 for the purpose of encouraging fox fur promotions. The Fur Farm Journal, Toronto, was appointed as the official organ of the Association.

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