

TIMELY NOTES ON SILVER FOX FARMING

Being An Authoritative Report On Silver Fox Farming Conditions In Europe Compiled By Mr. George A. Callbeck, Manager Of The Fur Marketing Department Of The Canadian National Silver Fox Breeders' Association, With Introduction By Lt.-Colonel D. A. MacKinnon, D. S. O.

From our earliest acquaintance with silver fox furs we have consistently heard of the superiority of Canadian pelts. In fact for many years the only pelts sold were of Canadian origin, first from the wilds such as the forests of Labrador, the wooded parts of Quebec and Ontario, Alaska and northern parts of Alberta with some few skins from other regions of the North American continent.

Then came the domestication of La Reynard Argente in our own Prince Edward Island and the production, first in small quantities by the pioneers, Dalton, Oulton, the Rayners, Tuplins and Gordons, then in constantly increasing volume until recent years when many thousands were marketed.

In the meantime the industry had spread far afield through sales of live foxes to breeders in the United States where it was augmented by the gigantic operations of such concerns as the Fromm's and Neimarts with the domesticated type of Alaska-Wisconsin fox; to Quebec, Ontario and western Canada and more particularly to Norway, whose large importations of breeding stock—the last in 1930—are too recent to be forgotten by even the most casual breeder.

European Competition

Today that country peopled with the same Nordic strain of hardy warriors that landed on the coasts of Britain and France many centuries ago and left their impress, have so improved what they received from us and developed it that they are today being acclaimed among the best sources of fine silver fox furs.

True, Canadian skins were at a disadvantage on this season's markets, due to the very unfavorable weather of the summer and fall of 1935 for fur development. The extremely dry summer and the very wet fall laid a train of conditions that only the most exceptional could cope with. The result was the marketing of many thousands of inferior skins, brown or off-color guard fur even when the guard was not so badly off-color. There were a great many skins pelted too early with consequent lack of underfur; in fact lack of underfur was one of the most serious defects of the 1935 Canadian silver fox skins.

So many complaints reached Canada from consignment houses regarding the quality of the skins and so much favorable comment on the Norwegian skins, that insistence was placed on the necessity of Mr. George A. Callbeck, Manager of the Fur Marketing Department of the Canadian National Silver Fox Breeders' Association, going to Europe, making a thorough study of conditions and bringing back a report of the fur auctions and our competitors' activities.

Today The Guardian submits to its readers his observations in detail, and we are confident that every fur farmer in Prince Edward Island will do well to give them careful thought.

Housing Pups

Perhaps the most revolutionary part of it is the change which the Norwegians have made in the housing of pups and the adults they are preparing for pelting. Here we have been accustomed to meeting the menace of hookworm and lungworm and also guarding against the effect of sun and rain on pelts by placing out foxes in sheds or coops on board floors which we cover with straw. Last fall on account of mists and rain the straw would be damp and the

ammonia from the fox excreta would cause a stinging or burning of the bellies and frequent cleaning of the bellies, also of the back and neck.

The Norwegians have torn out their board floors and replaced them with small mesh wire. The pups are placed in the sheds in a nest box with the mother fox at piling time. When the pups are eight or ten weeks old the nest box is removed. Large open pens are favored for breeding purposes, the most popular being ten by forty feet, the extra length being considered as more conducive to exercise than a square pen would.

Fish and Whale Meat

Other points which we note in reading Mr. Callbeck's report are the value they place on fish and whale meat in the growth and development of large pups. By the way, you will find that they have not only improved their foxes in size, but have secured clearness of color, two factors which add very considerably to the increase in value of a pelt.

The Norwegian fox farmers average cost of production with all charges put on his marketable product, the pelt, is in the vicinity of \$28, which is probably higher than ours because of larger feed costs and more thorough attention to details of sanitation. Our fur farmers can no doubt with great benefit take a leaf out of the Norwegians' book in dealing with parasites.

There, vigilant and unrelenting warfare is carried on. Here we are prone to take a laissez faire attitude and assume that all is well, when in reality these infinitesimal but none the less deadly enemies of the fox are carrying on their ravages, which manifest themselves in small, runty foxes with rough, brownish or low grade fur.

These preliminary remarks form my observations on what I would term is one of the most outstanding contributions in recent years to our silver fox farming knowledge here.

We now introduce Mr. George A. Callbeck's article.



MR. GEORGE A. CALLECK

In company with two genial Summerville doctors, J. C. Simpson and W. B. Howatt proceeding to London to take a post graduate course in medicine and surgery, I embarked at Halifax, Feb. 22nd on board the S. S. Antonia of the Cunard line bound for Liverpool, England.

We arrived at Liverpool on March 2nd which allowed some days for examination of the shipper's furs previous to the opening of the sale on March 18th.

Almost 84,000 silvers were this year offered on the London March sales. Hudson's Bay, Lamson, Anning & Cobb, Huth and London Fur Sales sold in the order named. The sale finished on March 28th.

There was only a moderate attendance of buyers throughout the sale—the smallest in fact that I have seen at any London auctions, being, no doubt, a result of the unsettled European situation, which became increasingly grave just previous to the sale. French and Belgian buying was small. Hence, with Italy and Germany not participating, the great bulk of goods sold was for the home trade with quantities purchased by United States and South America. American buyers bought up at good prices a considerable number of good clear pelts and three-quarter silvers. Under prevailing circumstances the results obtained must be regarded as very satisfactory.

A feature of the auction was the strong demand for best quality medium quality skins of \$7 to \$10 per pound, as were also the quarter silvers, slightly silvery and blacks. There was a good demand at prices at least equal to those of January. The inferior goods which were largely absorbed by the British buyers, were also sold.

It was a half silvery skin of very fine quality, clear in color, having dark neck and shoulders, with deep sides and heavily furred throughout. It was in fact, one of the finest skins I had seen my privilege to examine.

Norwegian skins had a somewhat better color than Canadian skins—they had better colored under fur. The brown under fur of the majority of Canadian skins had the effect of giving the general appearance of the skins a dull or brownish color.

Colour and Volume

It is plain that Canadian ranchers must pay more attention to color and to volume of fur, which I may state cannot be obtained by too early pelting. With some improvement in these two desirable features, color and volume, the quality and character which Canadian skins have would give them a preference with the fur trade.

While discussing with fur men and dealers in silver fox the question of the interest taken in the industry by European countries such as Norway, Britain, Russia and others, I learned that Russia is going after the silver fox business in real earnest. Among other things I gathered the following information: The Experimental Fox Ranch some distance outside of Moscow is run under Government auspices and control. It is a well managed institution with a thoroughly capable and fully qualified director in charge. Silver fox breeding is making wonderful strides in that country, and it is believed that by 1940 Russia will be marketing as many silver fox pelts as Norway.

One of the methods adopted by the Russian Government is to place pairs of foxes in charge of farmers, villagers and others for the purpose of breeding and raising stock to increase the fox population. Pelts of the animals raised by the farmers and others are to be taken by the Government Department in charge of fur skins at a fixed market price, which price is calculated to pay the ranchers the cost of breeding and bringing the animals to maturity. No information was gained re the success or otherwise of these methods.

Russian Enterprise

Russia has likewise an Experimental Mink Farm as well as a pen for the raising of Sable, Baum, Marten and Stone Marten. About 1,000 animals are kept on the Mink farm. The Sable and Marten sections are said to be very interesting. The families of these animals are small, usually of only two or three young and as they produce only one litter per year considerable difficulty is experienced in raising large numbers of them.

The Russian Government is of wonderful benefit to the fur industry in the great support it is giving to experimental work. Visitors are much surprised when they observe the immense enthusiasm displayed by the controllers and supervisors of this section of the Russian fur industry.

The Russians expect that the fur industry of the future will depend mainly upon the skins of domestic and ranch raised animals, and they are going after the business enthusiastically.

I might here add that the Russian Silver Fox Furs that I saw in London were furs of poor guard but with plenty of underfur. Their quality was not good, a condition that might be explained by the fact that the Russian Government has been unable to increase and improve its foxes is pelting only the poorest animals.

France, Germany & Norway

In Paris I learned that fur dealers had fairly large stocks of Silver Fox still on hand. This fact, in connection with the German pelage, and the anticipated trouble with her next door neighbour militated against the good attendance of French buyers at the auctions of Silver Fox; and in addition to these circumstances the unsettled conditions which usually precede a French election—especially with so many parties in the field as in the recent Election Campaign—tended to restrain the buyers from anything like keen participation in the sales.

In Berlin two days after the election which returned Hitler with a 99 per cent vote everything seemed to the casual visitor as going briskly. Flags were flying everywhere in celebration of Hitler's victory. Much work was being done on the streets and roads and the air was filled with the sound of the sirens. It was a very busy city. At the time of my arrival in Norway on April 2nd the weather there was cold. Two days later the thermometer dropped to 18 degrees below zero. Dr. Rochmann who in the employ of the Norwegian Association was in Canada a few years ago making a study of the Silver Fox Industry met me at the railway station at Oslo and mapped out an interesting itinerary for me. He accompanied me to various fox ranching outfits where I was privileged to meet a number

of good ranchers. This gave me a chance to get first hand knowledge of ranching conditions. Silver Fox Ranching is already in this country a great industry. At this time the exports of Silver Fox Furs are more valuable than the exports of any other commodity produced in Norway. Dr. Rochmann's part in this rapid advancement of the Industry has been a most important one. He has for a number of years been in charge of the Experimental Fox Ranch under the guidance of the Norwegian Silver Fox Breeders' Assn., and we got some idea of the results of his service by the progress made by the Norwegian Silver Fox Ranchers. I wish here publicly to express my thanks to Dr. Rochmann for his many courtesies and for the avenues of information he opened up that I might get a fair idea of how the Silver Fox Industry is carried on in Norway.

Norwegian Breeders

During my eight days visit in this country, I met some directors of the Norwegian Silver Fox Breeders' Association, and visited a number of prominent ranchers. The President, Lt. H. Dalsaune and other officers of the Association invited me to luncheon prepared for my entertainment on Tuesday, April 7th and the reception accorded me was a real one. The Norwegian Silver Fox Breeders' Association is operating nicely with a membership of about 4,000. Each member pays an annual fee which is approximately \$20.00. I was informed that the Association is now being inspected for registration. Each year 48 to 50 shows are held in different parts of the country from November 15th to December 15th. These are conducted by the Association proper or by the affiliated Association. The judges are appointed by the parent Association. At the first show of the season the judges meet, discuss, and decide on the standards that will decide foxes, pups and adults, to championship honors—to first, second and third prizes, etc. All foxes to be shown must bear Association identification marks on being entered, as an Association regulation is that all foxes must be tattooed by the date of registration. A fox exhibited at the show must be the standard agreed upon cannot win a prize, even if the class it is shown in be quite small, foxes that win prizes must subsequently be registered.

Norwegians feel that the policy they adopted in 1921 in dropping "inspection for registration" and substituting numerous fox shows has been very beneficial to the Industry.

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NEWSY NOTES

DE AGRICOLA

ROBIN HOOD

When the Norman kings introduced new laws into England, it was felt that the forest laws were more tyrannical than any which the subject race had been called upon to bear. The penalty for shooting deer in the royal forests without the king's permission, was terribly severe: the archer was punished by emasculation and loss of sight. At the same time the yeomanry of the Kingdom were everywhere trained to the use of the long bow, in the use of which they speedily excelled all other nations. There was thus a great temptation to those marksmen who lived near the king's forests, to break the law; and after so doing they quite naturally fled to the woods for shelter. They became outlaws, and "forming themselves into troops, endeavored to protect themselves from the dreadful penalties of their delinquency." (Percy.) Their extensive knowledge of the recesses of the forests which then covered England, made it easy for them to elude the civil power.

The antiquarian writer Stow, to whom we are indebted for light on many of the incidents of former ages, has this to say of the outlaw laws:

"In this time (about the year 1190, in the reign of Richard I) were many robbers, and outlaws, among the which Robin Hood, and Little John, renowned thieves, continued in woods, despoiling and robbing the goods of the rich. They kill a man but such as would invade them or by resistance for their own defence."

"The said Robert entertained an hundred tall men and good archers with such spoils and thefts as he got, upon whom four hundred (were they ever so strong) durst not give the onset. (In modern language, four hundred men dared not tackle them.) He suffered no woman to be oppressed, or otherwise molested; poor men's goods he spared, abundantly relieving them with that which by theft he got from abbays and the houses of rich old carles; whom Major (the historian) blameth for his rapine and theft, but of all the thieves he affirmeth him to be the prince, and the most gentle thereof."

Stukeley, another antiquary, says that his true name was Robert Fitz-ooth, and in his "Palaographia" gives a pedigree of the outlaw, "which, if genuine, shows that he had real pretensions to the earldom of Huntington." But it is a significant fact that the oldest ballads expressly assert him to have been a yeoman or freehold farmer; and a very old manuscript, preserved in the public library at Cambridge, begins:

"Little and lysten, gentlemen That be of fre-bore blood; I shall you tell of a good Yeman, His name was Robin hode."

It is not impossible, says Bishop Percy, who wrote about the middle of the eighteenth century, that our hero to gain the more respect from his followers, or they to derive the more credit to their profession, may

sell's at 16 to 20 cents per pound, pork hearts 9 to 10 cents per pound, and whale meat at 4 1-2 to 6 cents. Beef for fox feed costs ordinarily from 12 to 15 cents per pound, tripe 7 cents while beef liver is out of the question for fox food as it sells at 30 to 40 cents per pound.

The following are some feeding schedules for foxes in more detail: The idea of how the feeding on some good ranches is being done.

The feeding of 530 pups in ranch No. 1, for the morning meal, on July 5th, 1935, as follows:

- Whale meat—46 pounds.
- Green Bone—13 pounds.
- Pork Liver—22 pounds.
- Lettuce—7 pounds.
- Buttermilk—37 pounds.
- Porridge—18 pounds oatmeal, 1 part rice and 1 part.
- Soya Bean—105 pounds (cooked).
- Bread—5 pounds (dry).
- Total—235 pounds.
- For the evening meal:
- Fresh fish—88 pounds.
- Tripe—33 pounds.
- Pork hearts—33 pounds.
- Ground Green Bone—7 pounds.
- Buttermilk—33 pounds.
- Porridge—18 pounds (cooked).
- Fresh fish—11 pounds.
- Green Ground Bone—7 pounds.
- Fresh fish—15 pounds.
- Vegetables—7 pounds.
- Skim milk—26 pounds (dry).
- Bread—7 pounds (dry).
- Porridge—33 pounds (cooked).
- Eggs—25.
- Ord liver oil—1-2 teaspoonful per fox.

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have given rise to the story of the earldom themselves.

A tradition of the Middle Ages refers to an epitaph to be seen on a tombstone at Kirkless in Yorkshire, which relieved of its archaic spelling, ran thus:

"Here underneath this little stone Lies Robert, Earl of Huntington, No archer was as he so good, And people callery on Robin Hood Such outlaws as he and his men Will England never see again. Obit 24 kal dekembiris 1247."

Antiquaries had been stated, look upon this epitaph with suspicion and as the stone is not now in existence, we cannot form any judgment of its authenticity. The story goes on to say that Robin, feeling ill, went to Kirkless nunnery, where his cousin was abbess, and asked her to "bleed" him. This was a common remedy for any feverish trouble in those times, and women often acted as "leeches" or surgeons as we now say. The abbess was treacherous and opened the vein so excessively that the outlaw "bled to death."

"I can (hear) rimes of Robin Hood and Randal of Chester. But of our Lord and our Lady I lerne nothing at all."

In an old book whose title is "A Memoir on the Armour and Weapons of the Irish," we find some curious particulars of the fate of Little John, who, it seems, was executed for a robbery at Arbor-hill, Dublin. In this book, which was published in Dublin in 1788, full justice is done to the outlaw's skill in archery.

The ballad of "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" is given in Bishop Percy's "Reliques," from which much of the above notes is taken. There are several other sources of Robin Hood literature; as for example, the Peppysian Library at Cambridge. The present-day vogue is to dramatize the story without any great attention to verisimilitude; and doubtless there will, some day, be a film version which will, in point of invention, rival the famous picture of "The Mutiny on the Bounty."

GARDEN NOTES

The crocuses have come and gone, and the "Glory of the Snow" (Chionodoxa Lucille) is going; another "Glory," Chionodoxa Tmolli, is taking up the running, as the saying goes. C. Tmolli was procured from Holland last year and is in every way superior to the type, being larger and a bright blue with a white eye.

The English Iris (I. anglica xiphoides) came through the winter better than the Spanish Iris (I. spanica xiphium.) Some of the latter rotted in the ground, while the anglica group are thriving up stout stems. As these bulbous Iris (Continued on Page 13)

regarded as the better one is:

- Meats—6 ounces.
- Fish—4 ounces.
- Bone—1-2 ounce.
- Vegetable 1-2 ounce.
- Porridge—5 ounces (cooked).
- Skim milk—2 ounces.
- Total—18 ounces.
- The other system is:

- Prepared fish food—7 ounces.
- Potatoes—4 ounces (cooked).
- Milk—8 ounces.
- Vegetables—1-2 ounce.
- Total—17 1-2 ounces.

In both these systems the foxes are fed twice per day, and as in the previous schedule the weight is not all of dry feeds. System B is not satisfactory. Ranches No. 4, 5, 6, and 7 feed practically the same way, which may be briefly expressed as:

- Meats—50 per cent.
- Cereal—25 per cent.
- Fish—25 per cent.

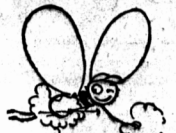
A good deal of buttermilk is fed to foxes in Norway. Skim milk is preferred to whole milk, as fats are fed sparingly. Fat is even removed from the tripe that is for fox feed.

Norway has made wonderful progress in silver fox ranching in just a few years. The Norwegian Government is going about this branch of the countries affairs in real earnest, and a spirit of enthusiasm pervades the industry. It is now preparing to take over the Norwegian Experimental fox farm, enlarge it and extend it to include in its Experimental work not only silver fox but also many other fur bearing animals. The Norwegian Silver Fox Breeders' Association may well be proud of its accomplishments which have been brought about chiefly through registration, the Experimental Fox Station and Fox Shows.

The Future of Foxes

With the Norwegian and Russian Government going after the Silver Fox business in such a wholehearted and extensive way, we can only anticipate what the results will likely be. It does seem that these European countries have no immediate fear of the saturation point in Silver Fox fur which condition of the Industry is occasionally referred to as a probable outcome of the near future.

In this connection, I might mention that the dyeing of silver fox fur in a number of attractive colors, though only yet in the experimental stage, is a work that is being taken up with some prospects of increasing the demand for silver fox. British dyeing and dressing establishments are large and their



Beware! Beware!!

Beware!!!

Mr. Moth: There is no doubt about it my dear, times are getting harder.

Minnie Moth (snappily): What's the matter now!

Mr. Moth: I've been looking around and it seems to me that all the women in town are putting their fur coats in the Island Furriers Storage Vault.

Minnie Moth: Yes I know; but I also know of a few coats hanging in warm closets that will provide us with plenty of food and make lovely homes for the summer months; if the Island Furriers don't get them first.

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work is wonderful. Nearly all kinds of furs are now being dyed in a great variety of colors. Dressers and dyers are of the opinion that the dyeing of silver foxes will increase uses to which it may be adapted and thus utilize to a larger extent the cheap and medium priced skin, especially the off-colored ones.

In our own country, the raising of animals for fur purposes has been a very profitable business in the past and there does not appear to be any reason why it should not be equally so in the future. The best success will not be achieved if fox breeders use individual and haphazard methods in the operation and care of their ranches.

There is yet much important work to be done by our Government in furnishing ranches with prompt and proper assistance with their problems. Fox Shows are beneficial, the Association is doing a part and the Experimental Fox Farm is in operation, but much more is necessary.

I mean these as constructive remarks, trusting that they may lead to discussions of what has been and is being done with a view to getting more and better service for Canadian Silver Fox ranchers.

If during my trip if there was one thing that impressed itself upon me more than anything else that claimed my attention, it was the importance of protective marketing by Organizations including the Norwegian Association as well as Canadian marketing establishments, which place reasonable reserves on the goods they offer for sale either at public auctions or by private treaty. Had there been no reasonable limits assigned to goods offered by such organizations during the March sale of this year more pelts would have been sold but the prices received would doubtless have been much less. Buyers, few in number with the pelt offering large, planned on a considerable cut in prices which if realized would have had a demoralizing effect upon the Silver Fox Industry.

The demand for other furs in New York is on the contrary rather routine. There is considerable sampling going on. This is confined principally to the furs most advantageous for trimming late summer and fall garments and also for the making of such wraps. At an important meeting between the representatives of the fur

(Sgd.) GEORGE A. CALLECK

FOX NOTES

The New York Auction Company's spring fur sale was marked by firmness. Full and half silvers were in greatest demand with between ninety and ninety-five per cent of these varieties sold. The attendance was large and buying was keen. Top prices for furs was \$235, and for halves \$75. The three-quarters were also strong with a top of \$94 being registered. Prices on all three of these colorings ranged on an average of from ten to fifteen per cent higher than the previous sale.

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Watch your fox pups for worms. They seem to be present in greater numbers this year than any previous year we can remember, probably due to the ground being bare so early. Many pups should be dosed at twelve days old and re-dosed again ten days later. Burroughs & Welcome capsules are best for very small pups. Next pilling use F'renches second.

The second highest priced pelt at the London Auction where \$37 was obtained for the Norwegian skin referred to by Mr. Callbeck was \$26 for a three quarter silver Fox Farms Ltd.

McLure and MacKinnon Silver Fox Farms Ltd., have 1579 living pups from 500 pairs of breeders. There are still quite a few litters to count or arrive. This is a slightly better production than last year. They find the late litters are considerably bothered with worms and are pilling them at 12 to 14 days.

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