

4.—Fur Farming.

Origin of Fur Farming Industry.—Since the early days of the fur trade, it has been the practice in Canada for trappers to keep foxes, caught in warm weather, alive until the fur was prime, and from this custom has arisen the modern industry of fur farming. The earliest authentic record of the raising of foxes in captivity comes from Prince Edward Island, where about forty-five years ago a number of foxes were raised on a farm near Tignish. The beauty of the fur of the silver fox and the consequent high prices realized from the sale of the pelts, caused attention to be directed chiefly to this breed, a colour phase of the common red fox, which has been established through selective breeding carried on by the pioneer fox farmers. After 1890 there came a period of rising prices for furs, and the fox farming industry grew rapidly in Prince Edward Island. In 1913 an enumeration by the Provincial Commissioner of Agriculture showed 277 fox farms in that province, with a total of 3,130 foxes.¹ While experiments were being carried on in Prince Edward Island, attempts at raising foxes in captivity were also being made in other provinces, the records showing that foxes were successfully bred in Quebec in 1898, in Ontario in 1905 and in Nova Scotia in 1906. In 1912 and 1913 the Commission of Conservation conducted an exhaustive inquiry into the history and possibilities of fur farming in Canada, and the resulting data, published in 1913, gave an impetus to the industry.² The Prince Edward Island Silver Fox Breeders' Association was formed in 1915, and the Canadian Silver Fox Breeders' Association in 1920. Fox farming is now carried on in all provinces of the Dominion and the number of farms is steadily increasing. The recognition of the importance of fox farming as a branch of the live stock industry is indicated by the addition, during 1925, to the system of Dominion experimental farms and stations (as shown on page 219 of this volume) of an experimental fox ranch at Summerside in Prince Edward Island, where the fox farmer's problems of breeding, feeding, housing and general care can be specially studied.

Although the fox has proved the most suited to domestication, other kinds of fur-bearing wild animals are being raised in captivity—mink, racoon, skunk, marten, fisher and rabbit. Karakul sheep, from which are obtained the furs known as "persian lamb", "astrachan" and "broadtail", are also being raised successfully in Canada. Mink farms are the most numerous of the miscellaneous class, racoon farms coming next. A few of the fox farms also raise miscellaneous fur-bearing animals in addition to the foxes.

Fur Farms of Canada, 1926.—The term "fur farm" includes farms devoted entirely to the raising of fur-bearing animals, together with parts of farms where the raising of fur-bearing animals is carried on as a distinct branch of the operations. Of such farms there were 2,702 in Canada in 1926, comprising 2,517 fox farms and 185 farms raising fur-bearing animals other than foxes. Chief in number among the latter are mink farms numbering 95, racoon farms numbering 57 and rabbit farms numbering 15. In addition to the above there were in 1926, 107 muskrat farms and 10 beaver farms, data regarding which are omitted from the statistics, as the operators are unable to furnish full particulars of the number of animals. Compared with 1925, the fox farms show an increase of 387 and the miscellaneous fur-bearing animals farms an increase of 32. Farms for the raising of Chinchilla rabbits, of Siberian hares and of coyotes were recorded in 1923 for the first time. Increases in the number of

¹ Census and Statistics Monthly, May, 1914 (Vol. 7, No. 69, p. 110).

² *Fur Farming in Canada*. By J. Walter Jones, B.A., B.S.A., Commission of Conservation, Ottawa, second edition revised and enlarged, 1914.