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Section 2.—Fur Farming.*

Fur farming is now recognized as an industry upon which the fur trade is becoming more and more dependent for its supplies of raw furs. In 1921 the value of pelts of ranch-bred animals accounted for only 3 p.c. of the total value of raw fur production, while in 1936 it had risen to approximately 40 p.c.

Origin of the Fur-Farming Industry.—A short account of the origin of the fur-farming industry in Canada was given on p. 249 of the 1929 edition of the Year Book, while a more detailed account of the earlier history of the industry was given in a publication of the Commission of Conservation, Ottawa, entitled "Fur Farming in Canada", by J. Walter Jones, B.A., B.S.A., the second edition of which was published in 1914.

Fur Farms of Canada.—The term "fur farm" includes farms devoted entirely to the raising of fur-bearing animals (principally silver foxes), together with parts of farms where the raising of fur-bearing animals is carried on as a branch of the operations. Although the silver fox is of chief importance, other kinds of fur-bearing wild animals are being raised successfully in captivity—mink, raccoon, skunk, marten, fisher, and fitch. The mink in particular thrives in captivity if it receives proper care, and the number of mink farms is accordingly increasing at a rapid rate. In 1936 the value of the silver foxes on the farms represented 85 p.c. of the total amount, and the value of the minks, 13 p.c., leaving 2 p.c. for all other kinds combined. In addition to the farms already mentioned, where animals are raised in rather confined quarters, many areas of marsh, stream, or lake are being operated as muskrat and beaver farms. In the case of these semi-aquatic animals, however, although the animals are usually kept within a carefully fenced area where they are given supplementary food and are protected from predatory enemies, they nevertheless live and breed under natural conditions.

For many years the fox-farming industry was expanding so rapidly, both in Canada and abroad, that the chief source of income of ranches was the sale of live animals for breeding purposes, while the production of pelts was a minor or incidental feature. Thus, in 1925, the value of live silver foxes sold was \$2,755,000, while that of silver fox pelts was only \$736,000. As the number of foxes on fur farms progressively increased, ranchers had to readjust their economy to declining values for both live animals and pelts. The industry appears to be gradually becoming stabilized on a pelt basis rather than on a live animal basis. In the latest year, 1936, the value of live silver foxes sold was only \$542,888, while that of silver fox pelts sold was \$4,950,290, and for all fur farms the sales of pelts represented 87 p.c. of the total revenue. Mink is forging ahead in importance both as to values of animals and pelts sold. For the latest two years shown the increases have been about 7 p.c. and 270 p.c., and 122 p.c. and 102 p.c., for animals and for pelts respectively, whereas over the same period the value of silver fox animals sold from farms has diminished appreciably and that of silver fox pelts has increased by only about 20 p.c. and 12 p.c.

* Revised by Miss F. A. Brown, Chief of the Fisheries, Fur, and Dairy Statistics Branch, Dominion Bureau of Statistics. This Branch publishes detailed annual reports on fur farms and on the production of raw furs.