

Fox Fur Grading.—In 1939 a system of government grading of ranched-fox pelts was initiated on a limited scale. In 1940 grading regulations were established and a complete grading service for ranched-fox furs was offered the trade by the Dominion Department of Agriculture. A list of the grades adopted showing the average price realizations during the season 1940-41 is given in the Statement on p. 257.

Grading offers many benefits to the producer, among which are: (1) the education of the rancher as to the proper value of the pelts he is producing and the creation of an incentive to improve the quality of his product; (2) the furnishing of much needed guidance in the planning of future matings; (3) as pelts are graded and lotted under governmental supervision before shipment to foreign countries, grading offers the opportunity of buying by grade and negotiating transactions on a definite quality basis.

Mink Fur Farming.—The ranching of mink is also of considerable importance. In Canada and the United States mink farming had already made considerable headway and, before the War, had spread to Europe, particularly to Sweden, Germany, Norway, Finland and Russia. At present North American producers easily lead in both quantity and quality.

So far as supplies of mink are concerned, it must be remembered that skins from the wilds still constitute an appreciable proportion of the annual Canadian production and that the best of these command the highest prices obtainable at auction. The mink-ranching industry is faced with problems similar in many respects to those affecting the silver-fox farms and it is necessary for those engaged in it to strive for the highest possible standards of quality, colour and texture, as well as lightness (in weight), and uniformity of size and appearance.

The marketing of mink pelts presents a number of problems particularly for the producer of comparatively few pelts. Merchants and manufacturers would rather buy 500 skins of even texture and colour than five separate parcels of 100 skins each. This consideration seems to indicate that mink ranching offers the greatest opportunity for success when undertaken on a large scale.

Statistics of Fur Farming.—The high prices obtainable for fisher and marten pelts have encouraged efforts to raise these animals in captivity and, although the work is still in an experimental stage, a moderate amount of success has been attained in each case. A recent addition to animals raised on Canadian fur farms is the valuable chinchilla. The records for the year 1939 show 146 chinchillas with a value of \$220,850. The raising of nutria (brought originally from South America about ten years ago) is making progress in British Columbia, the Prairie Provinces and Ontario; in 1939 there were 798 nutria reported on the farms.

The Dominion Department of Agriculture conducts, at Summerside, P.E.I., an experimental fur farm for the study of matters affecting the health of fur-bearing animals in captivity, especially the silver fox. The Department has, in addition, organized a service to assist in the marketing, both at home and abroad, of the pelts of Canadian fur bearers. Also several Provincial Governments have established branches that engage in experimental work and various other activities of value to the fur-farming industry.