

Subsection 2.—Fur Farming*

In the early days of the fur trade, it was the practice in Canada for trappers to keep foxes alive until the fur was prime, and from this custom has arisen the modern fur-farming industry. The earliest authentic record of raising foxes in captivity comes from Prince Edward Island, where about 65 years ago a number of foxes were raised on a farm near Tignish. After 1890, a period of rising prices for furs encouraged fox-farming and the industry grew rapidly. 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, which is a colour phase of the common red fox established through selective breeding carried on by the pioneer fox farmers. 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 show that foxes were successfully bred in Quebec in 1898, in Ontario in 1905 and in Nova Scotia in 1906. The profitableness of fur farming became widely known in 1910 when prices obtained for the first silver pelts at the auction in London, England, were published. An average of \$1,339 per pelt was received on the sale of 25, one alone bringing the sum of \$2,627. A boom followed but this collapsed in 1914 and it was some time before the industry regained stability. Fur farming is now carried on in all provinces of the Dominion and the number of farms, until the outbreak of war in 1939, showed a steady increase. An experimental fox ranch is operated by the Federal Government at Summerside, P.E.I., where problems of breeding, feeding, housing and general care are studied.

Although the fox was the first fur-bearing animal to be raised in captivity, many other kinds are now being bred—mink, raccoon, skunk, marten, fisher and rabbit. Mink are the most numerous and the most valuable of such farm-raised animals. From 1920 to 1939 there was a rapid expansion of fur farming in Canada and during that period there was a marked change in the type of furs that were most acceptable to the market. Black fox was popular 25 years ago. A few years later the highest prices were being paid for quarter and half silvers and during recent years the full silver and new types have been setting the upper price limit. The development of new colour phases in foxes and mink has proven to be an incentive to the fur-farming industry. New-type fox such as platinum, platinum-silver, pearl-platinum and white-marked are meeting a ready market as are the new-type mink including silver-sable, platinum, silverblu, snow-white and a number of other colour phases.

In recent years chinchilla farming has been increasing and an association, the National Chinchilla Breeders of Canada, has been formed. These fur-bearers are now registrable under Live Stock Registrations of the Federal Department of Agriculture.

Statistics of fur farming are given in Section 3.

Section 3.—Statistics of Fur Production*

Total Fur Production Statistics.—Early records of raw-fur production are confined to the decennial censuses, when account was taken of the numbers and values of pelts obtained by trappers. In 1920 the Dominion Bureau of Statistics commenced an annual survey of raw-fur production, basing its statistics on information supplied by the licensed fur traders. This survey was continued for some years.

* Revised in the Agricultural Division, Dominion Bureau of Statistics.