

## II.—SELECTION OF STOCK.

In the selection of stock for the breeding of any species of animals, the greatest care must be exercised, or serious financial loss and disappointment will follow. This is probably of greater import in the farming of foxes for profit than in the rearing of any other class of live stock. Many reasons exist for this, the principal being that the fur of the silver fox has from time immemorial been the fur of Royalty. The exploration and sentiment of those remote corners of the earth inhabited by the fur-bearing animals has progressed, till now the securing of fox pelts is presenting greater difficulties each year, and, furthermore, the difficulty of rearing these animals in captivity has presented insurmountable barriers.

The animals mature rapidly, and the returns have reached a figure which in many instances has placed poor farmers in affluent circumstances within a very short period.

If possible it is preferable to secure breeders from what is termed pure-bred stock, or stock that is known to be capable of reproducing its kind without a reversion of type. At the same time it must be borne in mind that the pelt value is the ultimate basis upon which the industry rests, and the only one to be considered when selecting the stock. In judging of the pelt value in breeding stock, another consideration enters, namely, the conformation and stamina of the individual, for without perfect conformation, deformities will be encountered in the progeny, and without a very high stamina, the progeny will be weaklings and succumb early in life, losing to their owner not only the pelt value and the individual but the profits which would otherwise accrue from such as future breeders. These considerations are paramount and will save much subsequent annoyance if thoroughly weighed at the outset.

Having borne in mind the foregoing considerations, the breeding of the progenitors of the stock selected should, in so far as it is practicable, be known as far back as it is possible to go. This ensures the fixity of the type and thus eliminates the danger of a recessive or sport\* appearing in the progeny. Such recession not only has a tendency to depreciate the value of a given litter but the possibility of its recurrence in such a breeder's progeny is ever present. It is thus apparent that where the type is fixed, and it is known that the chances of a recessive or sport occurring are remote, the value of the pair and the progeny as breeders is greatly enhanced.

This also brings in for serious consideration the probabilities that may be expected from the introduction of silver, black, patch, or cross foxes for breeders. At the present time little or nothing is definitely known concerning this. Many hold that a fox is a fox regardless of colour or place of origin and that it may be mated in any manner without danger. Others, again, hold that nature has bred foxes of different varieties, each true to type, such as the Alaska blue, the Northwest black, the cross, the red, and the grey; that these types are fixed, and while in the first generation they may freely interbreed, this progeny being hybrids will be sterile or very nearly so. We get hybrids among equines by crossing the Jack and the mare or the stallion and the Jennet, yet these cannot be bred further. Among birds we know that domestic and wild geese cross, and while this cross results in the finest table bird known it does not go further, as the hybrids are sterile. Upon this basis it is argued that the various breeds of foxes have been fixed by some fundamental law of nature, and that these laws cannot be controverted by man's desire to secure valuable fox pelts, excepting along certain given lines which future experience alone will determine.

These considerations possess a definite cash value in any breeding proposition, and must be considered in the organization and development of strains of breeding

\* A recessive or sport in breeding is the offspring of an animal whose characteristics, either colour makings or conformation, revert to some ancestor, male or female. This recessive characteristic may skip a number of generations before presenting itself.

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