

THE CARE, SANITATION AND FEEDING OF FOXES IN CAPTIVITY.

INTRODUCTION.

Within a very few years the rearing of foxes in captivity has attracted more than ordinary attention. The very high value attached to pelts of exceptional quality naturally resulted in those who had been supplying the higher grades attempting to rear those wily animals under artificial conditions. For some years this was practically a secret industry, but the ever-increasing price of pelts led to offers being made for live animals with a view to using them for breeding purposes. From a very moderate figure the price has gradually increased, and now many of the choicest animals are capitalized at from fifteen to thirty thousand dollars per pair, with very few available.

It is natural that the maintenance of such valuable animals in captivity has, as in other lines of endeavour, presented its problems of care, sanitation, and feeding, which, in some instances at least, have been disastrous. Breeders are alive to the fact that there is no royal road to wealth in this industry; nevertheless, the returns have been great and progress has been made as new facts have been secured to reduce the hazard.

The purpose of this compilation is not to supply information which will prevent all future losses, but to point out some of the fundamental principles, the observance of which will, in a measure at least, assist in a fuller understanding regarding the problems confronting those now engaged in, or about to engage in, the business.

As a general consideration it is taken for granted that the keeper has had experience in the care of foxes under artificial conditions, is a keen observer and is possessed of sound judgment in their handling and management. He should be a person of unimpeachable integrity, for otherwise there will be difficulty in learning of leaks should such unfortunately occur. The utmost care should consequently be exercised in his selection, or serious failure may be anticipated at the outset.

While many consider that luck plays an important part in the financial success of fox farming, I believe that it is but a minor factor, and that a thorough knowledge of the animal, its vagaries at various seasons of the year, coupled with an understanding of methods of feeding and sanitation are the factors which will with greater surety lead to success.

In discussing the whole subject, I will endeavour to take up the various features under different headings in order that those desiring to consult this small treatise may do so with the least possible difficulty.

I may here acknowledge my indebtedness to the Veterinary Director General, Dr. Fred. Torrance, my chief, who detailed me to the investigation of this industry, to Premier Mathieson, through whose instrumentality I was permitted to visit Prince Edward Island, to Mr. Fred. L. Rogers, president of the Fox Breeder's Association, to Dr. W. H. Pethick, the inspector in charge of the Health of Animals Branch for Prince Edward Island, and to the many breeders, keepers, and investors who in every instance afforded me the opportunity to learn of their methods, their successes, and their failures. Without this assistance my mission would have been fruitless and the data for this compilation could not have been secured.