

## CANADIAN FURS - THE FOX



The fox, smallest member of the dog family, is found throughout Canada. Colored foxes - the red, the cross and the silver - are common from coast to coast and north to the timberline. The colored fox has also adjusted to life in settled areas. The white fox inhabits Canada's barren lands and Arctic islands. The cross fox and the silver are color phases of the red fox. Red fox litters often include cross or silver pups.

Foxes mate in February or March and the young are born in April or early May after a gestation period of about 52 days. The litters average five pups and both parents care for the offspring. Although foxes eat practically anything, their main foods are mice, rabbits and birds. They will on occasion raid farmers' chicken coops.

Ranch-raised silver fox was popular in the first half of this century. Foundation stock was either trapped wild animals or fox pups taken from their burrows.

Jet-black pelts were popular first, then the silvery types began to draw top prices. The shift in popularity is possibly because red fox pelts could be easily and cheaply dyed to imitate black fox fur. No way has yet been found to imitate the unique markings of the silver fox.

As fox-farming developed, breeders developed mutation foxes - glamorous departures from the conventional black and silver animals. The first of these mutations was the platina, produced in Norway from

Canadian breeding stock. At a 1940 auction in New York, one platina pelt sold for a record \$11,000.

### LESS DEMAND TODAY

By 1940, world production of fox pelts had increased enormously, but the fashion swing to short-haired furs such as mink was already under way and the demand for foxes began to drop off rapidly. While silver foxes are still produced on a small scale, on Canadian farms business is slower because prices in most years have been below production costs. The breeders who remain in business do so in the hope that some day a fashion reversal will renew their fortunes.

In winter, the color of the Arctic or white fox ranges from a clear white to white with a slight creamy tinge. In summer it is greyish-brown. The blue fox is a color-phase of the white, and blue pups may occur in white litters. The Arctic fox is smaller than the red fox and its bushy tail is shorter.

White fox furs are the staple of the Eskimo trapper. This fur is popular for capes, stoles and collars. Its Arctic background provides a dense woolly underfur quite unlike the smooth, flatter fur of the colored fox. The few blue fox furs that come from the wilds are usually smoky brown in color. The blue fox is raised in large numbers on farms in Scandinavia, Poland and the Soviet Union.

*(This article is part of a series on the Canadian fur industry and fur-bearing animals.)*

### NEW THREAT TO MILDEW

Mildew - the microbiological destruction of cellulose-containing materials - has a new enemy in a family of fungicides, developed by textile chemists on the staff of the National Research Council of Canada. Canadian Patents and Development Limited, a subsidiary of NRC responsible for licensing inventions of government scientists, has

applied, on behalf of Dr. David M. Wiles, head of the Textile Chemistry Section of the NRC Division of Chemistry, and Tony Suprunchuk of the same Section, for patents on a new fungicidal composition and a new method of applying it.

The NRC researchers discovered that the condensation products of aldehydes and ketones with the chemical thiocarbonylhydrazide are highly effective for inhibiting or preventing the growth of cellulose-