

FUR-FARMING IN CANADA

I. Introduction



UR-FARMING is a new industry in Canada, but its development has been rapid. A particular investigation conducted in the latter half of 1912 and further inquiries made during 1913 revealed numerous instances where animals of various species were being bred in captivity for their fur. Foxes of two species and of all colour varieties, skunk, mink, raccoon, fisher, beaver and muskrat were found upon fur-farms. The marten and otter are likewise being domesticated for their fur. During the past two years the number of fur-farms has multiplied exceedingly. In the province of Prince Edward Island, which may be considered the centre from which the fur-farming interest has chiefly radiated, probably six hundred ranches exist where one species or another is kept in confinement. In Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland the industry is extending with great rapidity and at this date—November, 1913—practically every trapper is trying to capture foxes, mink, marten, otter and skunk for purposes of domestication. A great and rapidly extending interest is manifested in Quebec, Ontario, Western Canada and the New England states. Russia has realized her advantageous position for the prosecution of this industry and has passed an enactment prohibiting the export of her karakule sheep. An extensive development of sable, silver and polar fox farms is also taking place in that country.

The great interest manifested in fur-farming is to be ascribed to the remarkable success attained in breeding silver and other colour phases of the fox common to Eastern Canada. The black and dark silver prime skins from foxes produced on Prince Edward Island ranches have rarely brought less than \$500.00 each, and frequently bring over \$2,000.00 at London auction sales. The pioneer fox breeders have acquired wealth in the business and their success has inspired their neighbours to engage in a similar line of work. Naturally the price of breeding stock, responding to the increased demand, has risen to many times the fur value, so that the ownership of even a pair of silver foxes is impossible to the average farmer.