

III. Manual of Fur-farming

COMMON RED FOX

THE fox is found on every continent and comprises a number of species. The common red fox, which exists in the greatest numbers, has a range which "extends across Europe and northern and central Asia to Japan, while, to the south, it embraces northern Africa and Arabia, Persia, Baluchistan and the northwestern districts of India and the Himalayas." In North America, its range extends south to Virginia and includes all Canada (except some northern regions), and the northeasternmost portion of the United States. Its wide geographical range accounts for many distinct local phases or geographical varieties. These phases, or sub-species, differ from one another in form, in size and, to some extent, in colouring; but the differences are often not apparent to the untrained observer. It is easy to distinguish the four species of foxes commonly seen in America, viz., the common red with its white tipped tail, the arctic or polar fox with its short ears and blue or white pelt, the kit-fox with its black tail and small size, and the gray fox with its gray and red colour and erectile hairs down the tail; but it is more difficult to distinguish the sub-species of the common red fox.

The popular classification is by colour, as follows:

COMMON RED FOX (*Vulpes*), found in some districts in several colours, viz.:

Red Fox—When red or yellow over sides and back.

Silver Fox—When no red is present.

Cross or Patch Fox—When the sides and neck are red and the back, shoulders and hips are silver. An intermediate between silver and red.

The red, silver and cross foxes are not distinct species and not even distinct breeds. Silver foxes usually breed true to colour, and continued selection will insure the distinctive colour markings of each colour variety.

Scientists, of course, follow the universal rule of measuring the skulls and teeth for classification purposes. The colour is not a consideration with them. Merriam classified the North American red foxes as follows:

V. fulvus—Ontario, Quebec, Eastern United States.

V. bangsi—Labrador and North shore of gulf of St. Lawrence.

V. delectrix—Newfoundland.

V. rubricosa—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Caspe, Prince Edward Island.*

* As it has been segregated for ages, the Prince Edward Island fox is, possibly, a distinct variety.