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FOX FARMING SHOWS RAPID GROWTH

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Fox farming is fast gaining favor in the United States. The industry, barely known a decade ago, is fairly common in some States of the northern tier, is represented in all States in this tier and in that next to it, and is growing rapidly. There is money in it for the raiser who starts modestly, learns the business, and then expands his holdings. There are losses in store for the type who starts with a big ranch, no knowledge of the business, and only a desire for quick profits. At the present time the industry is undergoing a process of stabilization. Most fox farmers raise animals for breeding purposes, and comparatively few have adjusted the business to a pelt basis. All told, there are between 10,000 and 15,000 silver foxes being grown in captivity on American fox farms at this time.

Such are some of the conclusions of a representative of the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, who has just returned to Washington after an extensive investigation of American fox farms and the methods of their operation. In Canada, where the industry originated, and especially on Prince Edward Island, where there are approximately 15,000 foxes in captivity, fox farming is conducted on a much more extensive scale than in the United States. Its promise of good financial returns to those willing to master its problems, give indication that within a comparatively short time in this country it will rival in proportions the industry in Canada.

The best location for a fox farm is where the winters are cold and the fox may have opportunity to develop fur in keeping with the needs of the climate. The industry is thus confined by climatic conditions to the Northern States. There the raising of foxes for breeding and for the fur markets flourishes. Most of the foxes raised in captivity are on farms, or "ranches," with pens for from 25 to 50 pairs, although in occasional instances the ranches are much larger, containing pens for as many as 150 pairs.

At this period of the year the fox raiser is engaged in making ready for the mating season. The foxes generally breed in January and February and the young are born within 52 days. A pair of foxes raises one family a year, the number of young varying from 1 to 10, though rarely exceeding 5 or 6.