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PELT CROP ON SILVER FOX FARMS
28 TIMES LARGER THAN IN 1923

New uses for silver fox fur and a steady consumer demand have helped the fur trade to keep pace with the young and rapidly growing fox farming industry in the United States. In less than 15 years the annual crop has increased from 6,000 pelts in 1923 to more than 170,000 pelts in 1934.

This season's pelting, which started in November and will last through the winter months, very likely will produce a crop slightly larger than last year's, according to Frank G. Ashbrook, in charge of fur resources investigations of the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

"Virtually all of last season's pelts which brought the fox farmers \$7,114,500 were disposed of by the fur trade before the present pelting season got underway," says Mr. Ashbrook.

More than half of the 1933-34 season skins, which were either graded as full silver or three-quarters silver, were used in making short and long capes, large collars and wide trimmings on fur and cloth coats, and in trimming velvet and satin gowns. As many as 30 pelts are sometimes required in making some of the more expensive long capes. A few years ago the pelts were used primarily in making neck scarfs.

Only in recent years has the raising of silver foxes in captivity for fur become an important American industry. It experienced a boom from 1910 to 1914

because of the heavy demand for breeding stock. At the beginning of the World War the boom ended and the more serious breeders began raising foxes primarily for their fur.

Since 1923 pelt production has increased steadily. The number of pelts produced and their total sales value were both about ten times as great in 1928 as they were in 1923. Sixty thousand pelts produced in 1928 brought fox farmers \$7,719,600 as compared with the \$579,000 they received for 6,000 pelts in 1923. Sales values dropped in the three years following 1928, but from a low point of \$3,472,000 in 1931 they advanced to \$7,000,000 in 1934. During that period the annual crop increased from 110,000 to 170,000 pelts.

Pelts produced in 1928 sold at an average of \$128 each, the highest average price on record for the last 12 years. In 1931 the market value of pelts dropped to an average price of \$31.57 each, but lately it has ranged from \$40 to \$45.

About half of the pelts produced in the United States comes from Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan, according to Mr. Ashbrook. In general, silver foxes are being raised for fur in the northern tier of states from New England westward to Oregon, and in the cooler parts of California, Colorado, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. The growth of the industry in Canada has been similar to that in the United States, but on a somewhat smaller scale.

Each year the pelt crop of the U. S. Fur Animal Station, Saratoga Springs, N. Y., is graded in order to get information on skins produced under controlled conditions. Heredity, feed, sunlight, climate, and methods of handling are studied to learn what part they may play in causing tinged, or brown-colored pelts. These sell for less money than the better grade pelts.

Tests at the station show that tinge can be controlled to some extent by placing the foxes in furring sheds five to six months before pelting. In these sheds the animals are protected against excessive sunlight which apparently is one of the causes of tinged fur.