

Democratic Watchman

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RAISING SILVER FOXES.

Arthur Schliecher finds fox-raising the most interesting job in the world. For him it holds as potent a charm as inventing does for Edison.

Fourteen years ago he was as undecided as to what he wanted to do in life as are most boys of seventeen. But about that time fate, in the form of a pair of red foxes, stepped in. He had always loved animals. So having caught the foxes, he took them home, built a cage, and spent hours each day caring for them, watching and studying their habits.

The next spring four pups came to his pets and his interest was fanned to a flame. Would those pups live and thrive if he kept the little fox family in captivity? They did; and while it may have been due more to the instinctive care given them by the parent foxes than to anything the boy could then do for them, still out of that incident grew his great desire to raise foxes.

Fox pelts were worth good money. That he knew from the trappers who ranged the great bluffs that surrounded his native village, Millville, Minnesota. That being the case, despite the ridicule of the neighbors and the disapproval of his parents, he procured several pairs of cross foxes. For three years he worked and studied their idiosyncrasies, their wants and needs. No amount of trouble or loss deterred him from continuing his efforts to find the methods that would bring success.

Even his parents were beginning to think him temporarily insane. "Playing with those old cats, and wasting all your time," was his mother's tearfully reproachful way of expressing her opinion of his venture.

He will smilingly say in speaking of his work and the urge that kept him going during those difficult years, "My fox pups died; my grown foxes died; but always I felt that some day I should find the way to prevent such losses."

And he did. Furthermore, he has worked those lessons into a system of housing and handling, and a feed chart giving the daily menu through a whole year, so that every would-be fox farmer who is possessed of "horse sense" and industry can succeed without learning of that most expensive teacher, Experience.

When he had learned these lessons, he felt that he was capable of raising the best animals that could be obtained, and dreamed of raising beautiful silver foxes. He knew that the silver black fox pelts are among the few furs that cannot be successfully imitated, and consequently always bring the top market price, so he determined to raise that kind of foxes. He then burned all his bridges by disposing of his inheritance of a small but well-established lumber and hardware business, and invested in two pairs from Prince Edward Island, Canada, paying three thousand dollars per pair. This done he plunged into the business with renewed zest and with increasing success, both in handling the animals and financially.

At the end of four years he had one hundred and seventy-five of as fine, healthy silver foxes as could be found in the United States or Canada, and his ranch had become known as the largest of its kind in the West. His ambitions had now outgrown the possibilities of the Millville site, and he desired to secure a larger farm in a less secluded region; but he alone; had not, as yet, the necessary capital to obtain and equip the sort of place he envisioned. Therefore, he determined to try to interest financially-able men in such an investment.

But again the old adage—a prophet is not without honor save in his own country—was exemplified. Of those acquaintances approached not one believed in him or the great future he had made during his eight years of solitary work.

Finally, however, he explained his plans and presented his records to John Schmauss, of Lake City. From him came the first encouragement that had been vouchsafed, and it was through his influence that others were eventually interested in the project, and the Rest Island Silver Fox Company formed, with Mr. Schliecher as its secretary and manager.

The present farm is, as its name indicates, an island. It is located in the Mississippi where that river widens to form Lake Pepin, and its two hundred well-drained, wooded acres form an ideal site for raising these beautiful little animals. Grouped among the trees are one hundred and ninety kennels, each in a pen, which is in reality a huge wire box, forty feet by twelve feet by six feet in size. This box-like construction prevents the foxes from either digging or climbing out. Surrounding these pens and the ranch outbuildings is a guard fence of two-inch mesh wire six feet to nine feet in height and buried a foot or more in the ground.

As it cost but a trifle over two cents a day to feed a fox his daily ration of meat or fish, supplemented by milk and various cereals made into mush, the feed bill for the one thousand that were raised during the 1922 season did not amount to as large a sum as the uninitiated would expect. And in October one shipment of thirty-six pairs brought \$42,000! Many other pairs were sold later, as well as the pelts from the less perfect animals. The prices for single pairs range from \$1,200 to \$1,500, and pelts bring from \$200 to \$800 each.

Practically all of the breeders are sold in the United States; but the pelts are disposed of in foreign markets. Thus has come the fulfillment of Arthur Schliecher's dream of building the largest silver black fox farm in the United States, and one of the largest in the world.

Hungarian girls marry early, usually at the age of 16. When a girl is unmarried at the age of 23 she automatically becomes an "old maid" to her friends.

FARM NOTES.

The systematic use of a disinfectant sprayed in all buildings and on poultry paraphernalia is the best and cheapest health insurance policy. It is the strongest bulwark against disease and vermin.

Geese are a very economical source of meat. They are grazing creatures, capable of sustaining themselves on pasture land. They require virtually no grain, except for fattening, and the minimum of care and housing are needed. Goslings are easy to raise.

Yellow, brownish stains that form on mica peepholes to brooder and incubator lamps, and which obstruct a clear view of the lamp flame, can be removed by a strong solution of washing soda or vinegar. Alcohol is also useful in removing these stains. Use a soft rag and but little pressure.

Well-boiled rice mixed with a little charcoal or the water from boiled rice will often check bowel troubles in little chicks. Another remedy is to dissolve fifteen grains of catechu in each gallon of drinking water. Reduce the animal protein of the diet, such as beef scrap, and substitute milk.

Chickens and most fowls can no more nasticate their food without sharp grit than we humans can chew our food without teeth. Grit must have angular edges to it to make it sharp, to give it grinding power. Smooth, round pebbles are virtually worthless. Prepared poultry grit, which comes in various sizes, is on sale at most seed firms and farmers' supply houses and costs about eighty cents the hundred pound sack.

Sand, fine gravel or dry soil to the depth of a quarter of an inch, covered with half an inch of cut clover, alfalfa or wheat chaff saved from threshing or sweepings from the hayloft, make an ideal covering or bedding for brooder coop floors.

The sand and litter act as an absorbent, furnish grit, encourage exercise, help to keep the floor warm and dry, act as a dust bath, allay odors, and the clover or alfalfa or sweepings also furnish the chicks with tid-bits.

Scaly legs is an irritated condition of the shanks and toes, which is caused by a parasite that lives under the scales of these parts. The trouble is not serious, except that it is unsightly and very disconcerting and quite likely to be spread throughout the flock. No careful poultryman will tolerate this condition.

Apply vaseline containing 2 per cent of croolin to the affected parts. An ointment containing a little carbolic acid or sulphur will do the trick also. Endeavor to remove the scaly deposits by soaking the shanks in warm, soapy water, but do not pick them so as to start bleeding.

The best poultry feeds available will fall to produce eggs or flesh unless they are accompanied by a liberal supply of clean drinking water. Water softens the feed and makes it ready for digestion. Water acts as a carrier and distributes the nourishing parts of the feed where it is most needed by the body tissues.

Water carries off the waste from the body. Water equalizes the temperature of the fowl's body. Water enters largely into the composition of the egg, the egg being about 75 per cent water. Practically speaking, water is just as valuable as grain, because the latter will fail of its purpose without water.

Bulky feeds, such as bran, alfalfa and ground oats are as essential part of the chicken's diet at all ages; they promote crop development, supply mineral elements and assist in the digestion of the more concentrated feeds; but the content of fiber or indigestible portion of the bulky feeds should be kept as near 5 per cent of the ration as possible. In short, do not overfeed dry, bulky feeds any more than you would underfeed them. One extreme is as harmful as another.

All things considered, millet seed is of little importance as a poultry feed. Because it is hard, round and slippery it is found to be indigestible for young chicks. For grown stock the nutrients which the millet contains can be more economically supplied in other grains.

A small quantity of millet seed may not prove harmful and it is usually included in the ready-mixed chick feeds to add variety; but fed exclusively or in large quantities it is almost certain to start trouble. It has a way of escaping the grinding action of the gizzard, because it is so hard and slippery; thus it evades digestion.

A turkey hen will lay from fifteen to twenty eggs before becoming broody. If one wishes to obtain a second clutch of eggs, it is not difficult to break the hen of broodiness, whereupon she will soon start laying again. The first lot of eggs can be hatched under chicken hens.

Gapeworms are likely to bother young chickens at this season of the year. The birds are most susceptible from ten days to six weeks old, because at this age they are not large enough or strong enough to dislodge the worms from their throats, as in the case with the grown stock.

The worm which causes gapes is in reality two worms—male and female—which are so firmly grown together that they cannot be separated without tearing the tissues. The female worm is the principal member; it is about one-half inch long, while the male is little more than one-fifth of an inch. The heads of both are attached to the mucous lining of the windpipe or trachea, which causes such an irritation that undue secretions collect and make breathing difficult.

Sometimes so many worms collect in the trachea and grow to such size, for their eggs develop while they are in this state, that breathing becomes impossible, and the host—the afflicted chick—dies from suffocation.

Chicks affected with gape-worms will be seen to cough and sneeze with labored effort in a vain attempt to dislodge the pests. Soon they commence to gape, extending the neck and opening the beak, indicating they are having great trouble in breathing. Later, as they become weakened by their struggles against the parasites, their appetites fail and they grow dull and listless; their wings droop and the birds stand with half-closed eyes and

heads drawn back into the body feathers. In this condition they are apt to die from suffocation or to be trampled by their fellows.

In dealing with this complaint the poultry keeper should learn to rely more upon preventive than a cure, because very young chicks are very difficult to treat individually; therefore, the operation is expensive.

Good results have been obtained by extracting the worms with a feather, twisted horsehair or one of the patented wire extractors. These devices are forced down the victim's throat, either dry or moistened with turpentine, then twisted about vigorously in an effort to dislodge the worms and remove them. Be careful not to take too much time to the operation and perhaps strangle the chick.

Good results have been reported from medicating the drinking water or by injecting three to ten drops of a 5 per cent solution of salicylate of soda. The best method of prevention is to put the chicks on fresh ground that is known to be perfectly sanitary, and if any trouble is experienced, to treat the yards and premises with a strong disinfectant, the same as for other kinds of worms or parasites.

It should be understood that worms have their origin in the soil. Clay soils and those which are inclined to be wet for long periods are most likely to be infested. Be careful to drain off any stagnant water and to fill in any marshy places. Sunlight is a potent enemy of the worm and other such parasites. Expose the soil to the sun by spading or plowing at regular intervals.

If colic or roup appear in the flock, disinfect the drinking water at once to prevent the spread of the trouble, which is likely to be communicated by the water. To each gallon of water add the amount of potassium permanganate that will remain on the surface of a dime. These crystals will color the water a deep purple. It is a widely used antiseptic and can be purchased at any drug store. Roup birds or seriously sick birds should be isolated.

TWO MILES A MINUTE TO QUALIFY.

One hundred and twenty miles an hour! Two miles a minute! This phenomenal speed, without parallel in the annals of racing, will be the minimum qualifying mark required of all the cars entering for the great championship classic at the Altoona speedway of June 13.

The new qualifying speed, just announced by the officials, exceeds by ten miles the fastest gait ever required on any of the fast board tracks of the world, and is forty miles faster than that required of the same cars and drivers at the famous Indianapolis course.

The continued streak of record breaking speeds established by the speed kings of the world since Ernie Ansterberg, since killed at the Charlotte bowl, roared around the oval at Altoona last Labor day close to 130 miles an hour has caused the new minimum because the track at Altoona has repeatedly re-established itself as the fastest track in the entire world.

The central ticket office of the speedway at East Altoona has reported the advance demand for seats as even surpassing that of last year, when record crowds of 80,000 attended each of the two big events. Requests for reservations are being received from all over the country as the new supercharger equipped cars are expected to create new racing history.

Onion Sets Scarce—Planting Seed.

Owing to the shortage of onion sets many farmers and gardeners are planting onion seed. If the seed is sown thickly in the beds small onions will develop by the end of the growing season. They are then dug up and spread out in a dry place. These will be next year's onion sets. Those who do this will not be caught short handed or have to pay the high price asked this year. Years ago it was the accustomed rule to grow onion sets instead of buying them.

If one wishes mature onions, seed can be sown now, being careful to plant thinly, the same distance in spacing as onion sets are planted. It is almost too late to plant seed for onion sprouts, although a late crop might be produced.

Reports from seed houses say that the crop of small onions was unusually large last year but at harvest time the weather was unfavorable, spoiling their keeping qualities. While many of them looked nice they soon turned soft and spoiled.

Sixty Prisoners Win Certificates.

Sixty of the 140 prisoners at the Blackview penitentiary who enrolled for night class studies last fall with the engineering extension department of The Pennsylvania State College, completed their courses and received certificates from the college department at special exercises in the penitentiary assembly room a few days ago. There was an interesting program of talks, and music by a jazz orchestra composed of negro prisoners, to the enjoyment of the 500 inmates who attended the exercises. Certificates were presented by Prof. C. G. Gaum, who congratulated and shook each man's hand as he handed out the treasured certificates that will help the prisoners in after-life. Penitentiary officials declared that they would give opportunity for continuing the courses next fall for the third consecutive year.

Keep It Pp.

The Clean Up and Paint Up campaign not only puts the community in good sanitary condition, but makes it possible to keep it clean. Unless the work of Cleaning Up and Painting Up is kept up by systematic efforts the year around, little permanent good is accomplished. It is important that the initial intensive work be general and thorough. Then the follow-up work can be carried on effectively, and the danger of unsanitary conditions returning is removed.

MELLOWING AGE.

We get the sweetest comfort
When we wear the oldest shoe.
We love the old friend better
Than we'll ever love the new.
The old songs are more appealing
To the wearied heart—and so
We find the sweetest music
In the tunes of long ago.
For there's a kind of mellow sweetness
In a good thing growing old—
Each year that rolls around it
Leaves an added touch of gold.

Mines Closing Down all Through Region.

Closing down of mines in the Central Pennsylvania bituminous field within the past few weeks has thrown more than 12,000 men out of employment. Inability to market the coal except at a loss is the reason given by the operators for closing down.

Officials of the Buffalo and Susquehanna Coal and Coke company notified its 1200 employees at the Sagamore mine in Armstrong county, that it would close down.

Other operations closed down since April 1 are the following, involving upwards of 12,000 men, who have been working from two to five days a week in the past: Steinman company at South Fork; Shoemaker company, at Lilly; Bougher, Cartright company, at Beaverdale; Taylor-McCoy company, at Gallitzin; Duncan-Spangler company, at Barnesboro; Empire company, at Barnesboro; Sterling company, at Hastings; H. W. Swope, at Madera, and all of the Allegheny River coal company's operations from Brookville to Kittanning, employing about 2,000 men.

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