

HIGHLANDS SILVER FOX FARM

by
Mrs. Sidney McCarty, Jr.

The Highlands Silver Fox Farm is the only one of its kind in the Carolinas. Raising Silver fox puppies is the chief crop. Instead of plowing our farm, we stretch fences, buried a foot deep, to keep foxes in and dogs out. Where we stretch one fence another is required to keep any fox that is skilful enough to get over the first fence from escaping.

We have approximately four acres "planted" in pens and kennels; this is where the breeders are kept. In each kennel live a Mr. and Mrs. Fox and family of from one to six puppies. Each fox is fed from three-quarters to one and a half pounds of food daily, usually at dusk. A meal contains thirty-five ingredients, balanced to give the correct vitamins and minerals. Several foxes can be coaxed to eat from our hands but the majority are too wild and shy.

On a fox farm instead of observing the seasons, spring planting, summer working, fall harvesting, and winter preparation as most farmers do, our seasons are, mating season, November to February; whelping season, March to May, during this time we walk the floor instead of Papa Fox; growing season, May to October; pelting season, November to December. Each season brings its own worries, joys and anxieties; however, the most nerve-racking seasons are mating and whelping. Any unusual noise, or anything that causes the foxes to become excited, may result in serious loss at this time, consequently the farm is not opened to visitors until all puppies are at least six weeks old, usually June 15th to November.

The work on a fox farm is very interesting and varied and keeps us on our toes. We must be mechanics to keep the old Ford going; horsetraders to keep the foxes supplied with fresh T-bone steaks; bookkeepers to keep our records straight; and veterinarians to keep the foxes in good condition. It is all very interesting and absorbing work, especially the care of the foxes.

Each fox is an individualist and has different traits of character, and we have named many of our accordingly. There are Sir Cutie-Pie, the show-off; Lady Cross-Patch, the nagging wife; Ex-Mrs. Pete, the gay divorcee, and Peewee, the latest addition to our family. He is the little fellow we raised with the aid of the cat. His mother killed all of his brothers and sisters and would have killed Pee-Wee too had we not adopted him into our family.

There are 124 foxes on this farm, all of them thorough-breds. In this herd we have succeeded in breeding quite a number of foxes with exquisite white markings on their feet and chests. The foxes when full grown weigh from 20 to 30 pounds; maturity

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