

MONEY-MAKING IDEAS

by
Jeff Powell & Susan J. Rottman *

The following money-making idea was presented at a conference sponsored by Successful Farming magazine. The goal of the conference was to

provide farmers and ranchers with "a headfull of practical money-making ideas, an eye open to yet other opportunities, and the spirit to explore them." We hope

the ideas described in this and succeeding issues of this paper can help Wyoming farmers and ranchers add supplemental income to their own operations.

RAISING MINK AND FOX

(Jack Brennan, senior vice president,
Mink Specialties Co., P.O. Box 278, Dundee IL 60118)

Why Get Involved in the Fur Industry?

It is a unique business - truly international in scope - that requires total commitment on the part of the farmers to raise a quality end product through sound genetics, quality feed programs and well-developed management techniques.

How to Start Raising Mink or Fox

It is recommended to work one or two years on a fur farm to gain the experience of working with these animals. You should begin with a small number of mink or fox and increase the size of the herd through well-planned, short, and long-range plans. The average-size mink farm in the U.S. today is 800 females and 160 males. The average fox farm today is 50 females and 35 males.

Is There a Future Raising Mink and Fox?

An interesting question! The answer rests with

consumers throughout the world, the retail fur industry and international economics.

- * Will more and more countries become more affluent?
- * Will fur garments be in demand or will the retail fur industry be out-marketed by such industries as automobiles, vacations, boats, jewelry, etc.?
- * Will younger women create a new market for the fur industry through their demand for specialty fur jackets, coats or other apparel containing mink and fox pelts?

Because of younger, aggressive, marketing--oriented executives in key positions in the fur industry, many experts predict a growing demand for fur garments during the next ten years.

\$10,000 or \$50,000?

Most people start slowly, building one or two sheds with a minimum number of

breeders. Yes, one could easily begin with a \$10,000 investment and progress slowly. Many of today's most successful mink farmers started with only a few mink 25 or 30 years ago. Today, the most successful mink farmers range in size from 1,500 females to 20,000 females. There are less than 10 mink farms in North America who raise more than 10,000 females.

Keys to Success in Raising Mink and Fox

These animals raise one litter per year - with mink litter size averaging 3.8 and fox 2.6. Naturally, increasing litter size is the goal of most fur farmers. Improving pelt quality is also top priority - with resulting higher market prices for pelts. A few select producers are also fortunate to sell breeding stock to fellow producers throughout North America.

Services Available to Fur Farmers

Veterinarians and nutritionists of feed company staffs are deeply involved in providing

Who Produces the Most Mink and Fox?

Wisconsin leads with Minnesota and Utah following closely. Washington, Oregon, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Ohio are also key mink production states.

technical aid on feed programs and disease problems. Auction companies advise on

Other Key Issues

- * Types of feeding programs used today.
- * Relationships of North American mink and fox to other international companies.
- * Types of mink and fox raised in the U.S.
- * How pelts reach the consumer.

marketing procedures and many provide financial support at times.

- * Why U.S. is considered the quality producer.
- * What constitutes a typical year in raising mink and fox.
- * Shed and pen construction.
- * Obstacles affecting fur farms.
- * Predictions on the future for North American fur farmers.

* Jeff Powell is a professor of range and watershed management at the University of Wyoming and the author of several books on ranch recreation, wildlife habitat, and planning. Susan Rottman is president of RLS International and the owner of a ranch with commercial goose and pheasant hunting. They have presented over 300 seminars and workshops in numerous states and countries on home-based business, rural entrepreneurship, and ranch recreation.