

# QUICK RANCHERS

BY ROSEMARY CURLEY

The wild red fox rarely recovers from sarcoptic mange and fortunately it is not a disease which affects PEI foxes. The Island is free of both rabies and mange and there are no recent records of either in wild or ranched foxes. Still, it has always puzzled me that no mange was imported during the early days of fur farming when a clandestine trade in foxes, likened in scope to rum-running, was operating on P.E.I. Island foxes were very early recognized as superior and a quick profit could be made by importing foxes and immediately reselling them as the genuine Island moneymaker.

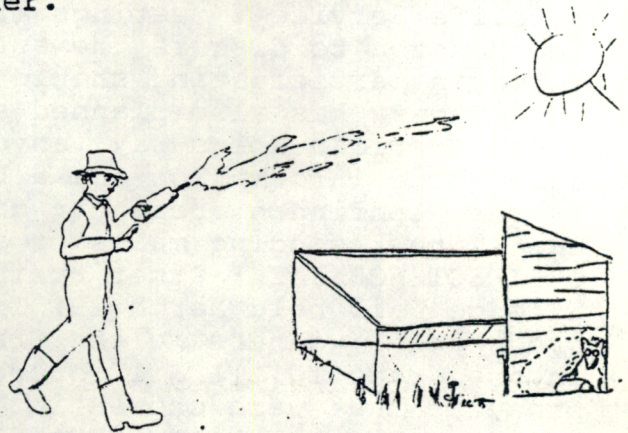
Foxes were imported from all areas of the continent for both legitimate and fraudulent purposes, from Alaska, Alberta, Wyoming, Quebec, Ontario and especially from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Today one need only look across the Northumberland Strait to find an area where mange is a recurring problem in wild foxes. Therefore, I was not surprised when I recently turned up an early record of mange on Island fox ranches. Luckily, Island ranchers were equal to the problem and the mange mites were quickly annihilated.

As related by Dr. I.E. Croken, a veterinarian, fox ranchers had forseen the inevitability of importing disease with their animals and demanded that preventative measures be taken. After July 1913, incoming foxes were inspected by the Federal Health of Animals Branch. Despite these measures, and perhaps in part due to the illegitimate fox dealers, sarcoptic mange was recorded on ranches in January of 1914. The outbreak involved animals on several ranches throughout the province, the source not mentioned. The ranches were immediately quarantined, foxes were treated and daily disinfection of fox pens and equipment undertaken. Mange mites and eggs in pens fell before the "fire-gun", a painter's blow torch, and the disease was overcome in a matter of months.

The isolation of an island has some drawbacks...causeway, anyone? But isolation, coupled with good regulations, has succeeded in keeping wild furbearers on PEI mange-free.

## LITERATURE CONSULTED

- Balcolm, A.B. 1916. Fox farming in Prince Edward Island - a chapter in the history of speculation. Quarterly Journal of Economics Vol 30 p 655-681.
- Croken, I.E. 1929. Early experiences of a ranch veterinary. Rod & Gun and Canadian Silver Fox News Vol 31 p 72.
- Curley, F.R. 1983. Population dynamics and morphological variation of the red fox (Vulpes vulpes rubricosa Bangs) on Prince Edward Island. Unpublished MSc thesis Acadia University 189 pages.



A CURE FOR MANGE