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# FUR FARM FOR PROFIT

With Especial Reference to Skunk Raising



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SPENCER, IND.

# FUR FARMING FOR PROFIT

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With Especial Reference  
to Skunk Raising

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By

H. B. Laymon

Proprietor of the Laymon Skunk Farm

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1913

The Laymon Fur Farm Co.

Spencer, Indiana

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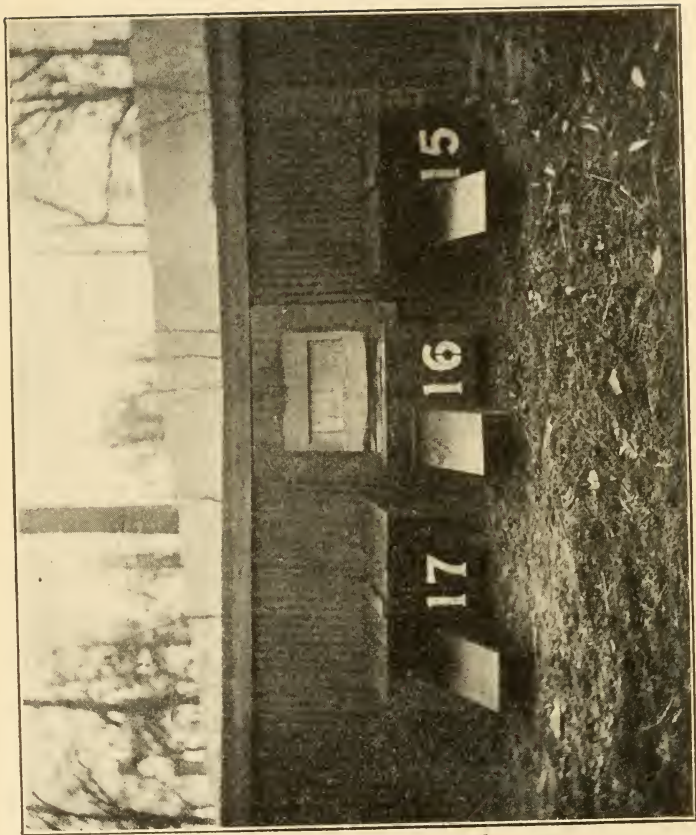
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Breeding Range, Constructed of Galvanized Iron.

## INTRODUCTION.

I CAME from a family of hunters and farmers." This reminds me of a quaint saying I heard when I was a boy. We were talking about hogs at the time. A young girl overhearing our conversation, remonstrated with us because we appeared to have some of the habits of hogs wrong. We asked her how she knew we were wrong in our diagnosis of the hog? And she answered:

"We'll, I guess I ought to know, I was brought up among hogs, lived among them all my life!"

This is my case exactly, I have been brought up among skunk. I have made a study of skunk, and I think I know skunk. I know this much well:

Years ago the thought struck me that there ought to be money in raising skunk for fur and breeding purposes. To prove the right or wrong of this, I started to raise skunk. I captured a female and her litter, later got a star buck, and with this beginning I have succeeded in establishing one of the largest and most successful skunk farms in America, and I am proud of it.

I do not mean to imply by this that I think I know "it all" about skunk. Far be it from that. But what I know has been learned by diligent study and the best of all "practical experience." My farm was not a success from the start. It took a few years for me to learn the "how of things," but I am glad to say that things are

looking bright for yours truly. I firmly believe a few years more will see me independently rich, and from an old piece of land which would be practically worthless for any other use.

My motive for writing this book is to benefit my fellow man. Hundreds of people have written me for information about skunk. It would be impossible for me to courteously answer one-tenth the mail I get in a personal way. It struck me, inasmuch as there was no book on the market devoted to the skunk that by compiling this information in readable form I would be accomplishing a certain amount of good.

I feel this, too, if I had had the help in the first place—the information contained in this book—I would be worth twice as much more and saved myself years of trouble and much financial loss. I was the pioneer, and was blazing the way for others to make success.

To all those who are desirous of trying the raising of fur-bearers for profit we say: read this book carefully—study it,—and then if you feel that you can make it a paying business, make a small enclosure and try a half dozen animals. By the end of a year or two, you will know whether you are going to like it; whether you can make a success of it or not, and will have acquired a lot of very necessary knowledge regarding the animals, that could not have been obtained in any other way. You will know then whether to go ahead or not, and if the former, you will also know how.

While the U. S. Government is actively engaged in raising elk, buffalo, deer and other ani-



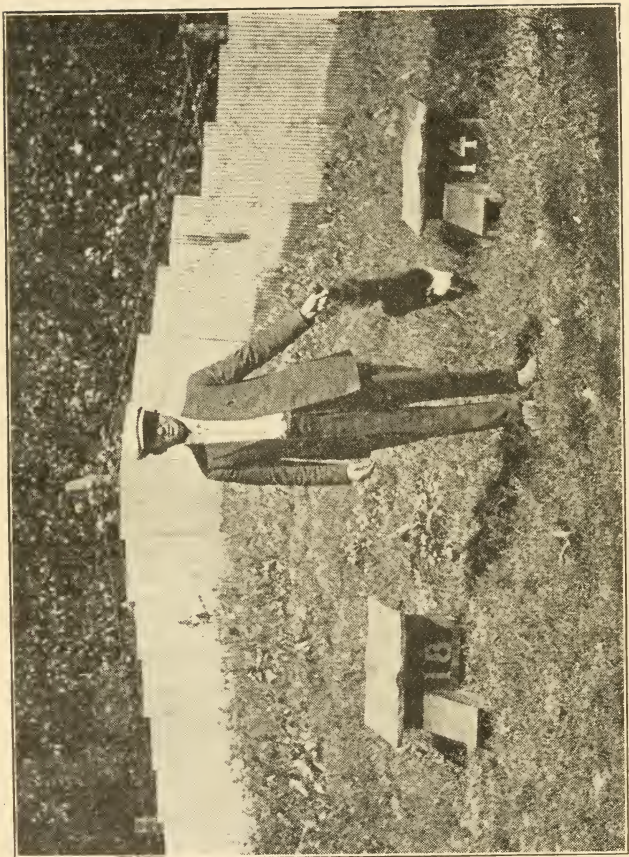
mals including fur-bearers, few bulletins are issued which give any direct valuable information on skunk. Government officials (the kid-glove kind) stick up their nose at the lowly skunk, and without reason. The skunk is a clean animal, easily domesticated, and known to be one of the most valuable animals to have around the farm. Only recently has this been thoroughly demonstrated. Such information as could be obtained from government sources has been incorporated in this book.

I have had no hesitancy in utilizing the information from other sources also. Chief among them has been the Hunter-Trader-Trapper Magazine published by A. R. Harding Pub. Co., of Columbus, Ohio, also his book on "Fur Farming" and such catalogues and guides as Andersch Bros. and others fur firms issue to their trade.

I differ with them when experience has taught me that my way of raising skunk is easier or more profitable, and I agree with them on many general principles. I have incorporated in this book also the experience of many other farmers and trappers. I have found many helpful hints in their letters which have been very valuable to me. And for what knowledge I have gained from them, I hereby acknowledge my indebtedness. "May they live long and prosper."

H. B. LAYMON.

Spencer, Ind., July 10, 1913.



Laymon Handling an "Unaltered" Skunk.

## CHAPTER I

### General Character of The Skunk.

**T**HE SKUNK is a little understood animal. By this we mean, that ordinary people, other than naturalists or scientists, little understand the habits and value of skunk. By some the skunk is classed as a reptile or varmint, and on account of its odor, is detested. Other animals throw scent, notably the mink and muskrat, of course not to the extent that the skunk does.

It is on account of this scent, that skunks are detested. We have animals on our farm which have never thrown a grain. And are yet in their wild state. They do not easily become frightened, hence have no use for their means of protection. That's the only time they use it, and seldom when fighting among themselves.

To make a success out of anything, it is admitted one must know the thing. To be a successful farmer one must know what to raise and how. So with raising of skunk, one must understand skunk, just as one understands horses, cows, sheep or poultry. And skunk, when properly understood can be raised in captivity at a great profit. 500,000 skins were shipped to london last year, besides the skins which were used here in domestic manufacture.

It is surprising to note the change in conditions, due largely to the enlightenment of the

rural population to the benefits of the skunk, also to the rapid increase and value of their pelts. Many skunk farms are in existence, the owners making a business of raising these animals for their pelts. While this may be a queer business, nevertheless it is perfectly legitimate, and as far as known, profitable. A ready sale of the pelts is to be had, and the skins from these domesticated animals generally bring higher average prices, being well handled and killed at a time when the fur is at its best. The domestic animal like cultivated fruits, are larger and in every way more valuable than the wild animal.

The skunk is found in nearly all the states and territories of the Union and climate and geographical conditions are responsible for the great variation in size and color of its pelage. There are very few fur-bearing animals as plentiful, and especially in the civilized sections, that bring such a handsome income to the farmer as does the skunk. As noted, the chief difference in character, besides the size of the animal itself, lies in the color of its fur.

The body is 16 to 22 inches long, its tail from root to farthest point of fur, 12 to 16 inches, the latter being covered with hair, the color of which varies, depending upon the color of the fur on the body. For instance, the fur on the tail of a black or short striped skunk is black or nearly all black, (first grade) while that of the broad or narrow striped skunk is interspersed with black and white hairs. While the skin of the animal is very valuable, the tail is rarely used, though manufacturers of late years have consumed the hair

in the manufacture of brushes and similar purposes. The legs are short and close to the body, the paw is naked and the five toes on each foot are closely grown together like that of the badger. The foot is well adapted to digging, but they dig very little in the tame state. The toes are not webbed; the head is small, with short, rounded ears and rather long, projecting nose, with two small piercing eyes.

#### The Skunk a Clean Animal.

The skunk in general appearance is always neat and clean, and in walking seemingly takes special pride, like the peacock, as when promenading, its tail is erect and its back peculiarly curved. Very few animals are as harmless as this creature and were it not for the peculiar odor which it distributes when in danger, it would be more hunted and probably eradicated in sections. Its principal weapon, as heretofore noted, is a peculiar secretion and fluid possessing a very disagreeable odor. This fluid is of a pale yellow color and is discharged by the animal when in danger, in thin-like streams and with such accuracy and aim as to strike any object within 6 to 12 feet. The fluid is secreted in two annal glands from which by the contraction of the sub-caudal muscles and by uplifting of the tail it is discharged in the form as stated above. These sacs are now removed with very little trouble by farmers, and without endangering the fur or breeding qualities of the animal, or ill-effect to the operator.

The removal of the scent sac has a tendency to increase the size of the animal ultimately. We



believe, too, that it requires less food to sustain life, consequently it is considered a profitable operation to perform. It is certain that the altered animal becomes more easily domesticated.

Learn to remove the scent sacs and thus avoid all complaints of neighbors and any personal inconvenience. If you learn to do this you can sell your striped skunks for pets or curiosities and in this way get good prices though the skins would be of small value.

The animal is carnivorous, nocturnal, not entirely terrestrial, as occasionally he is known to climb trees, perhaps not of choice but rather compulsion, being forced to this fancied secure position by the hunter or his dog. Consequently his arboreal, like his amphibious habits, are rather undeserved credentials. The theory that the animal climbs the trees in search of food and birds, is discredited. The animal is beneficial in many ways to the farmer, and his eradication from any farming community should be prevented, and laws prohibiting the wanton destruction encouraged.

The contrast in size of the animal and the important variation in the color of its pelage, due to climatic and geographical differences, cannot be denied. The breeding and inter-breeding of the different colored furred species is the principal explanation why the young of a litter are so much unlike in color. The color usually dominates to the black. It is proven that 50% of the young of a white female will breed blacks if the male is black. To breed stars, the male and female should be all black, if possible. 90% of such

young will be black, and it is possible to raise to maturity 90% of such litters. It is our experience that the female at rutting time will cohabit with more than one male like a dog or rather like a cat which it more generally resembles.

The predominating color of the fur of all species is black and white with the exception of the Texas skunk, which due to a peculiar soil, is of reddish cast. Some of the animals have a clear coat of fur, others are all black excepting a small white star, but the majority have two stripes, some terminating at the center of body, on others the stripe continuing from the forehead over the body, terminating at the tail.

This carnivorous and nocturnal animal is unlike most every other animal possessing these habits. He can be seen in the early morning returning to his haunts, and once in a while in the middle of the day; at no time is he in a hurry, or will he discommode himself by getting out of your sight or especially away from your path. His mode of locomotion is slow, and rarely will he be found away from his haunt a greater distance than one or two miles. His abode is usually in a hollow log, under some old barn or granary, or in a hole on the sunny side of some hill. He enjoys a sun bath, probably more than does the bear or the badger. His meal is made up by free consumption of worms, bugs, grasshoppers, mice, birds and eggs. In some sections he is known to be quite a vegetarian, consuming as he does, roots, berries, vegetables, and fruits. Occasionally frequents the hen-roost, not only for eggs, but for the hen as well. The young like bread and milk,

while we feed the old hominy hearts mixed with water and milk.

The animal passes the winter season in a state of incomplete hibernation, and at regular intervals he will arise, come out of his abode and expose his body to the sun, and judging from the effluvium, empty its distended pouches, but the stench thus caused, soon ceases, which is not the case when it is spurted under irritation or in self-defense. Dr. Coues states "that the animal uses this secretion in the relation of its perpetuation of the species, though overshadowed by its exaggeration into a powerfully effective means of preservation of the individual, is evidently the same as in other species of Mustelidae, each one of which has its own emanation to bring the sexes together, not only by simply indicating their whereabouts, but by serving as a positive attraction.

In the case of the skunk, it would seem that the strong scent has actually tended to result in a more gregarious mode of life than is usual in this family of mammals; and it is certain, at any rate, that the occupancy by one animal of a permanent winter abode serves to attract others to the same retreat. Burrows are sometimes found to contain as many as a dozen individuals, not members of one family, but various adult animals drawn together. One other effect of the possession of such unique powers is seen not so much in mode of life as in the actual disposition of the creature. Its heedless familiarity, its temerity in pushing into places which other animals instinctively avoid as dangerous, and its indisposi-



tion to seek safety by hasty retreat, are evident results of its confidence in the extraordinary means of defense with which it is provided.

In the domesticated state they do not use the scent only under extreme agitation. Dogs create this excitement, man seldom, even when handling them. When held by the tail, they are really unable to throw the scent.

#### The White Skunk.

The animal that has a clear, white-furred pelt is very sparingly found, in fact so seldom, that many consider it a freak of nature and not a distinct species.

Personally we do not find it pays to raise white skunk, save as pets, or the females for breeding purposes. We dispose of them before they have become an expense to us. It is the wise man who can judge when to kill and when to keep.

#### The Black Skunk.

The animal that has a black coat of fur is found in many states, those of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Eastern Canada, are better furred, and in consequence command better prices than those coming from the central states. The black skunk is also found in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Arkansas, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, in fact in every locality excepting in the northwestern states, also northwestern parts of Canada. The animal cohabits with the other species, and there is no apparent rule governing the breeding and inter-breeding and the probable coloration of

the offspring. Somewhat disregarding the color of the parents, the litter contains black, white, short, narrow and broad striped youngsters. But 90% will "take after" full black parents. If you use Star bucks you can reasonably expect Star stock. The fur of the black skunk, especially the eastern variety, is soft, wavy, and of a deep lustrous black. Those animals that have only a small white furred star at the forehead are commercially called "black skunk."

Great care should be taken in selecting the male breeders to avoid in-breeding. A skunk matures, or its fur becomes prime and salable in six months. The female brings forth young in a year. The life of a skunk is from five to seven years.

#### Short Striped Skunk.

This animal inhabits the same section as the black skunk, the only difference between them is that the small white star of the former develops into prongs or two distinct white-furred stripes, starting at the forehead and terminating at or about the shoulders or center of body. Quite often the forehead is entirely covered with white fur, and immediately beginning at the top of head the white hair continues in two prongs, each varying in width from three-eighths to three-fourths of an inch. Should the white stripes continue clear across the body and terminate at the nail, such skins cannot be classed as short striped but are known as long, narrow or broad stripe.

Short striped skins are second in value, the price being about one-third less than that of the black skins. The white stripes are of no value to

the manufacturer, and for that reason the skin that has the greatest amount of black fur is worth more and the value lessened by the increase of the white stripe. The fur of the tail is black with intermingled white hairs. The disagreeable odor is removed by the dresser (tanner) and by the time the skin reaches the manufacturer, it is cleansed from all impurities and ready to be made into garments.

#### Narrow Striped Skunk.

This animal inhabits nearly every state and territory of the Union and greater part of Canada, and is the true American skunk. His coat of fur is black, excepting two white stripes beginning at the forehead and terminating at the tail. The width of these stripes varies somewhat, depending upon the size of the animal, usually three-eighths to three-fourths of an inch. There is always a goodly portion of black fur between these stripes. The white stripes are narrow and close together, but widen apart at center of back, and again narrowing when close to the root of tail. The largest animals of the skunk family come under the long or narrow striped species.

#### Broad Striped Skunk.

This animal is found in common with the previous species, and its difference is only in the width of the white stripe which is wider, and the quantity of black fur on the skin is lessened, thereby diminishing the value of the skin. There is no apparent iron-clad rule, or a dividing line between, or just where and when a skin should

be called broad stripe and not a narrow striped skin. This naturally must be left largely to the judgment and discretion of the buyer or the manufacturer, who, in grading, seeks an average more than any particular dividing line. The tail is covered with hairs with occasionally interspersed black hairs.

#### One Striped Skunk.

This animal has a long, horizontal white stripe extending from forehead, continuing over the body, terminating at root of the tail; the latter is covered with white fur and is probably more bushy in proportion to its size, than the other northwestern species. The skin is of no great value. The fur is rather coarse and the skins undesirable.

From the above description it will be noted that the value of the pelt lies principally in the quantity of black fur; diminishing by the increase of white and increasing by the lessening of the white fur.

It may be of interest to note that skunk fur after it is manufactured is not sold as "skunk," but is a good substitute for many different kinds of fur which has a higher value placed upon it.

Of late years the white stripes that are cut out of the skins are being used in the manufacture of spurious tails which are dyed to imitate the natural tail of mink, marten, etc. At other times these white pieces are sold in connection with other fur scraps or cuttings to hat manufacturers. Only those skins that are prime in leather and full furred, command good prices.

## CHAPTER II.

### Fur Farming—Supply and Demand.

**F**ROM the dawn of history in this country the fur trade has been an important branch of commerce and had much to do with the rapid advance of discovery and exploration in the early days. But the extensive trapping operations since that time have sadly depleted the ranks of all species of fur-bearing animals and some of the most valuable are rapidly nearing extinction. This is especially true of the central and eastern portions of the United States, and the time is approaching when the ever increasing demand for furs must be met by some way other than trapping the wild animals—but how? Fur farming appears to offer the only solution to the problem.

The raising of fur-bearing animals is still in its infancy, but many experiments have been tried out from time to time, and it is a proven fact that if it is undertaken and carried out in an intelligent manner, the industry is bound to be successful; and why not? All of our domestic animals and fowls were wild creatures at one time.

There are practically no new and unexplored regions to trap and even in faraway Siberia, which we are taught to believe a land of wilderness and a fine fur-producing country, reports say that fur-bearers are becoming scarcer each year. The regions which have not yet been ex-

plored by the white men, have for many years been trapped by the savage inhabitants. Fur traders push into all accessible districts, and the trappers also, sometimes bring their goods hundreds of miles in order to trade with the white people. South America produces some furs, but the catch is not heavy, perhaps because there is not much trapping done there. But the furs from the more distant regions are, as a rule, of the more valuable kinds, and cannot supply the demand of the great middle class of people, the largest consumers. Such furs cannot take the place of those of the muskrat, skunk, raccoon and opossum, for these furs are usually made up to imitate the more expensive kinds. But as the supply decreases the demand increases at an equal rate.

The skunk, mink and muskrat do well in settled sections. There is always a cash market for raw furs and since the discovery of America, raw furs have been an important article of commerce. An industry paying the hunter and trapper probably \$15,000,000 yearly is one that should receive attention. The demand for furs is increasing as the population of the world is becoming more and more. Again furs are being put to more uses than ever. While the demand for furs is increasing, what of the supply? The day, perhaps is not far in the distance when the demand will call for two or three times as many furs as today. Where are they to come from, if not from fur farming?

A well known fur dealer in Minneapolis sizes up the situation in a nut-shell:

"Under proper conditions, with intelligent care, raising fur animals can be made to pay. The raiser starting on a small scale and increasing as their knowledge increases. Most all successful business is built up by starting small."

Conda J. Ham, in the Hunter-Trader-Trapper Magazine, says:

"Did you ever stop to seriously think where your furs and your fur coats would come from twenty or thirty years from now? At the rate fur-bearing animals are being killed off at the present time, there would not be fur enough thirty years from now to properly clothe the nobility of the old world, to say nothing of our American women who must have their new furs each season, and the others who must have at least one or two sets during a lifetime. The fur industry is admittedly fast dying a violent death. Some other remedy than those already prescribed must be discovered. We still have sections of the country where the same wild state of nature exists that could have been found three hundred years ago. We still have plenty of fur-bearing animals to keep alive their species if proper conditions prevailed. Therefore, it would seem that the problem to solve is, how can these conditions be best secured.

"Mr. Norman A. Wood, expert taxidermist in the University of Michigan's museum, the man most familiar with the animal life within the state and one of the greatest authorities on animal life in the whole Northwest, declares the fur industry can be saved only through the medium of great fur farms. His study of the situation has convinced him that the commercial growing of fur is coming to be one of the great industries of America.

"In various parts of the country such farms are to be found, and the profit derived from them has been sufficient to prove the success of the venture. Skunk farms have been started in various parts of the United States within the past few years and are proving paying enterprises.

"It is no vague dream that prompts one to speak of fur farming. The signs of the times point that way, indisputably. Every year the price of raw furs bounds up to hitherto unknown levels, the demand is constantly increasing almost as fast as the supply diminishes, and with



it having been demonstrated that fur-bearing animals can be raised, men are not going to let such chances slip by."

A. R. Harding, editorially in the same magazine says, speaking of fur farming:

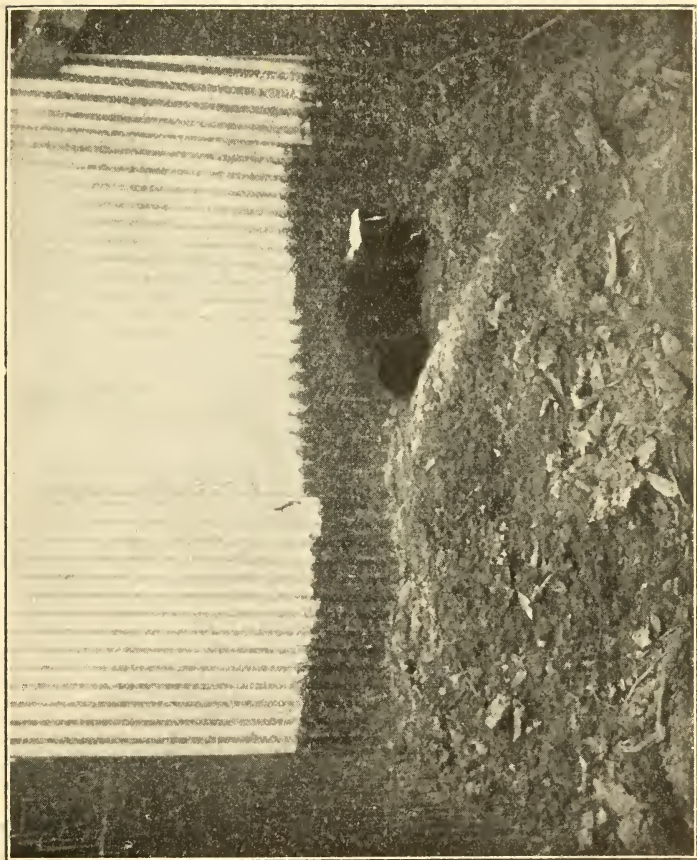
"The business surely looks like a "gold mine" at present prices of fur and breeding stock. Even should prices be reduced by one-half or more the business bids to continue very profitable.

"While scores, perhaps hundreds, will make good with the more valuable foxes—black-silver, cross—thousands will find that profits may not be so great (neither is the expense to get started) with the common red fox, skunk, mink, marten, coon, opossum and muskrat, yet the raising of these animals is not apt to influence values. The world needs millions of these skins each year, and the market is not so limited as with the high priced furs. Looks like a great future for the raiser of these animals. There is no denying the fact that the supply of wild fur bearers is gradually becoming less, not only in America, but throughout the entire world, while the demand for furs is constantly increasing."

Here is a bright future to "Fur Farming." The person who knows something of the habits of the animal or animals that they expect to raise, will be the successful ones. The same applies to fur farming. The farmer who has given attention to fur-bearing animals are the ones most apt to be successful. A good many attempts were made at raising skunks, a number of years ago, most of which were failures. Some entered the business on a large scale, knowing nothing of the animals, and of course failed; others "penned up" a few skunks and as they were not properly cared for, failure was the result.

The advanced price for skunk skins in recent years, has caused a revival in their raising. This





One of Laymon's Stars.

time, an entirely different class of people are taking up the work, and they are going to succeed. Why? Because they know something of the animal and are going at the business in a calm and business-like way.

People are not investing their all in a business without realizing the possibility of success or failure. More is known of the Skunk today. It is not the feared animal that it was yesterday. The day is not far distant when it will take its rightful place among furbearers and its hides sold for what they really are. There is hardly a more finer fur than skunk and it should not be necessary to hide its identity under a substitute name.

The fur farmer, should the market be low for certain animals, can keep over. Nine times in ten, this is the time to raise as many as possible, for by another season, that particular article is likely to be in demand. To illustrate: In the winter of 1908-09, No. 1 skunks from northern and eastern sections were worth \$2.00, while the following winter the same skins were bringing just twice this figure. If the skunk raisers who sold off their stock at low prices because the prospect was not bright, had gone ahead they would have had a heavy crop of fur to market at high prices by January, 1910.

Some reports from those who have experimented in a small way at raising fur animals is to the effect that they do not fur properly. This is true in regard to skunk, when kept in a box or a small enclosure for weeks and fed largely on meat. They must have contact with earth and be allowed to forage for food.

Skunk breed only once a year, unless the first litter are killed or die, when another is sometimes born, and it might be said, such is frequently the case.

One thing is important, and that is, get the animals accustomed to their keeper as soon as possible. The old will be wild for some time, but the young soon become tame. Skunk are easily tamed, even children have safely handled them.

A man who has been in the fur farming industry for years, in response to the inquiry, "Will the business pay?" says: "Yes, it will pay the right man big dividends on the capital invested." The right man is one who has natural aptitude for this sort of work, and who is "cut out" for fur farming. If he has a liking for this sort of work, he will study the nature and requirements of the animals and attend carefully to their every want.

Fur farming as an industry is only in its infancy, in fact, not begun. The future looks bright to those who engage in the business in a business way. To those who expect to make a fortune at the business in a year or two, we predict failure, but to all who are willing to go at the industry intelligently, building a substantial enclosure, paying the same careful attention to the feed and care of their fur animals that they would to other "stock," to get the best results, far more than ordinary profits should result.

Under ordinary circumstances skunk can be raised to maturity at a cost of about 25c. The cheapest skin on the market will bring at least a dollar, from that to live skunk at \$15. Average profit will be over 400%.

## CHAPTER III.

### Enclosures, Dens, Food and Care.

**T**HE enclosure for a fur farm is one of the most important things for a beginner to consider, for if it is not properly constructed, his labor is in vain. We have heard of parties going to a great expense to procure the animals and construct a fence to hold them, and because the fence was not built on right lines, the animals escaped. This was unnecessary had the netting or galvanized iron fencing extended about 18 inches below the surface. Skunk seldom dig over a foot into the ground.

The proper size of an enclosure depends on the number and kinds of animals you intend to start with. For 10 skunks or less and their offspring the first year we suggest an enclosure measuring 3 rods wide by 4 rods long or 12 square rods. This will even answer for a much larger number, but we do not believe in crowding. For 20 skunks and the first year's young the enclosure should measure about 4 rods in width by 5 in length.

You can successfully raise a hundred skunk on a single acre of ground.

After you have decided on this business the first thing is to find the proper location and make a suitable enclosure. There should be a spring on, or a small stream crossing the ground to be inclosed, but at the same time the ground must

not be wet; in fact, it should be of rather dry nature, so that there will not be too much dampness in the dens. That is the picture of an ideal skunkery.

But running water is not absolutely necessary so long as the animals are furnished clear water for drinking purposes. There should be banks of earth for the animals to den in and the ground should have a gradual slope so that it will drain readily. If it is of a sandy nature it will be all the better. Some who have tried skunk farming have located the yards on a shore of a small lake or pond and have included a portion of the pond in the enclosure. This is a good idea and it will not be necessary to extend the fence very deep into the water, as the skunk is not a water animal and will not dive under; however, where the fence crosses a stream of running water the fence should reach to the bed of the stream as the water will fall considerably during dry weather. Where running water is not to be had a basin of water should be provided for bathing purposes. They bathe about once a week. This is a habit little known by the amateur fur farmer.

The enclosures should be large as possible. When the animals are inclosed in small yards or pens they become infested with fleas, ticks, etc., and they do not do well. By sprinkling the animals with poultry powder usually used to destroy lice, and allowing the animal to den in soft soil these parasites can be easily eradicated. Such small enclosures will answer for a short time but as soon as possible they should be placed in a large roomy yard.

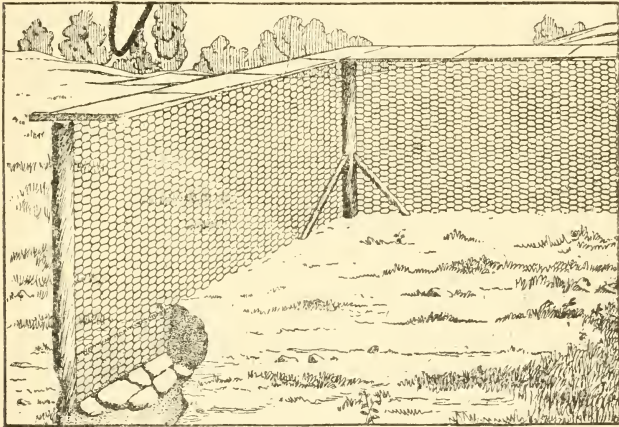
To enclose a certain amount of ground with the smallest number of rods of fencing possible, the plat or ground to be enclosed should be in a square. While the cost of enclosing an oblong piece of ground would be a few dollars more than if square, this should not stand in the way if the oblong piece of ground would make a better home for your fur-bearing animals. If one only desires to experiment with a few animals and has the material on hand, he may make a fence of boards, but it should not be depended on for long. Where stones are set up edgewise or cement used, it is rather expensive and as galvanized wire lasts well either in the ground, where not exposed to the air, or being galvanized, it stands the elements well, it seems to meet the requirements of the fur farmer for fencing or enclosure purposes. There should be some trees, or at least shade, no matter what animals you are experimenting with.

For fencing material, galvanized wire netting of one-inch mesh is generally used for the breeding yards, and 1½-inch for the outside fence, as the young animals will escape through a two-inch mesh. The outside fence should be seven feet in height. Under ordinary conditions the skunk would not escape over a four-foot fence, but there is danger in winter from drifting snow, and dogs and other animals must be kept out at all times; therefore, the fence should be of the height mentioned and it must be turned in at the top or a sheet of tin placed along the edge to prevent the animals from climbing out.

Some skunk raisers simply place flat stones on top of the ground at the foot of the fence to pre-



vent the animals from digging out, and some say that one of the most satisfactory ways is to place small mesh wire netting flat on the ground at the foot of the fence, inside, of course, and cover

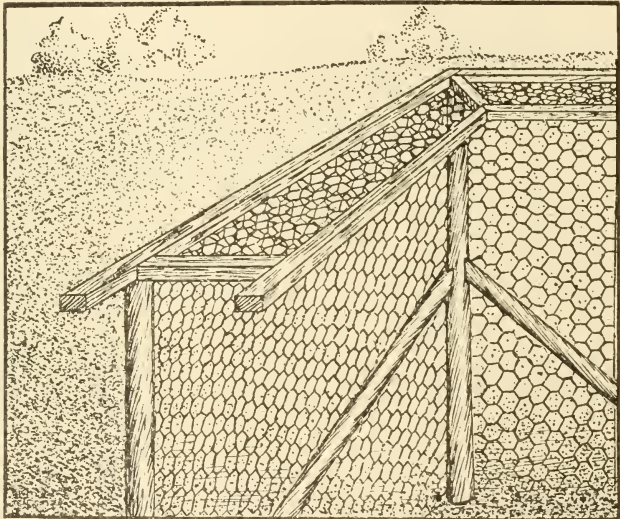


Fence of poultry netting, covered with sheet tin, showing foundation.

lightly with dirt. They claim that this is a very good way to prevent skunks from escaping by digging, but on the whole we think that the method of sinking the netting or galvanized iron about 18 inches below the surface is best.

The persons who expect to make "fur farming" a business, can begin in a small way and same need not interfere with other work to a great extent. Year after year, as they learn more of

the business, they can enlarge the grounds. Farmers and others who from experience know much of the animals, will no doubt be the most successful from the start. The ox, horse and sheep



Fence of Netting, Showing Support and turned in top.

were wild at one time, but they have become domesticated. Why not the same with the fur-bearers? This is exactly what should be done. Skunks especially, are very easily domesticated, When the raiser learns this and furnishes an enclosure

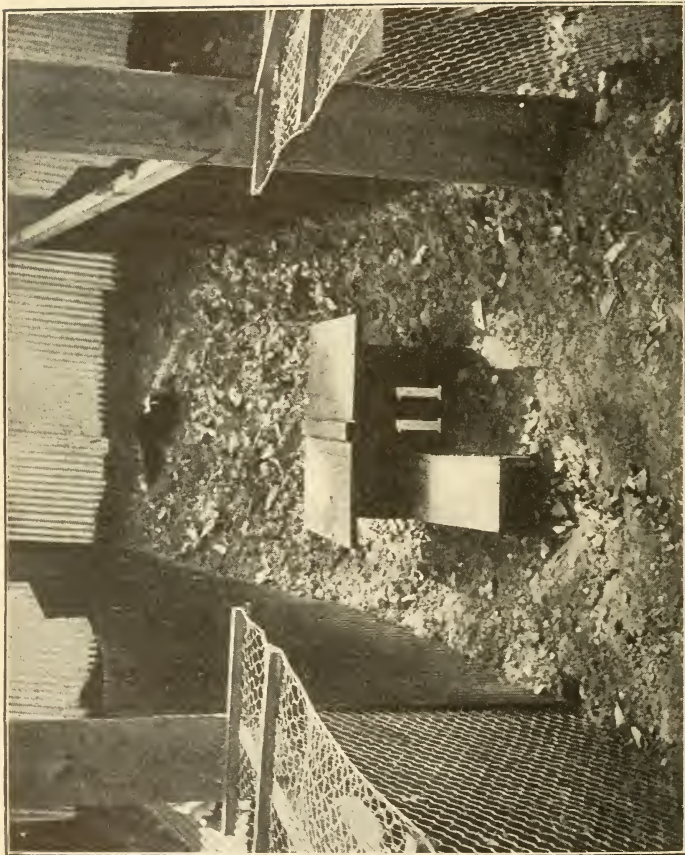


with dens and food similar to that which they get when in their wild state, they will be on the road to success.

On the Laymon farm we have been experimenting with galvanized iron or tin fencing, and we prefer it to wire netting. The animals appear more contented when they cannot see other and wider fields. This is especially true during the breeding season. This fencing is a better protection against dogs and prowling animals also on the outside.

In the case of galvanized iron fencing, we find that the fence need not be over five feet, with 3 or 4 strands of barbed wire to keep out dogs and prowling animals. The animals do not see out, nor prowlers in and hence the skunk are less liable to become excitable.

The interior of the enclosure should be divided into compartments, using netting or galvanized tin for the fences but they need not be so high. The largest compartment would be for the females and there should be a smaller one for the males, also one for the young animals after they have become large enough to take care of themselves. Some also make small yards in which to place the females, two or three together, after the young animals are born. The most of those who have tried skunk breeding, however, have not found this necessary, but there should always be a separate enclosure for the males. When the number of animals increases it will be necessary to have a few small breeding yards, large enough for ten or twelve animals. One need not, however, make such an elaborate enclosure in the start but



Breeding Range Constructed of Galvanized Iron.

can enlarge it as needed, adding more compartments.

In each compartment a number of dens should be made by digging a trench and covering afterwards. While the animals will dig dens if necessary, they prefer even while in a wild state to use dens already made. Boxes, barrels or pens with board floors should not be used. Some of the successful ones claim that this has a tendency to cause a thick pelt and thin fur and say that it is absolutely necessary that they have natural dens in the ground. The dens should be made quite deep so that there will be no danger from frost in winter and in all cases there should be plenty of straw or leaves for bedding purposes. Where the land is flat it seems wise to throw up a few mounds of earth so that the animal may dig into the soil. A hole can be started in a bank with a post-hole auger and the animal will finish it, seldom burrowing more than a foot further into the earth.

No matter what style of den is used it should be so constructed that there is no danger of it getting damp. Banks of earth of a kind which do not absorb and retain water make good places in which to dig dens, and it is easy to incline the entrance so that water from rain or melting snow cannot drain into the passage. The entrance should be made large enough so that the animals can pass in and out easily, for if the passage is small there is danger that the fur will be injured. There should also be plenty of dens, so that if one becomes damp or infested with vermin, the occupants can take up their quarters elsewhere.

On the Laymon farm we have several different kinds. The breeding pens are built partly to keep out the rain. After we have once ascertained that the young have arrived we do not disturb the female for several days, save to see that she has plenty to eat and drink. Females are quite devoted to her young. The entrance is of wood and in some cases tiling. The opening should be large to avoid rubbing the fur.

The summer dens are of natural earth formed or dug into earth, built around straw or wood, with tile entrance.

The winter dens are large, built like a well with a cave-like entrance. These things are necessary only where skunk are raised on a large scale. As far as possible, we do not allow the fur of the animal to come in contact with rough surfaces other than earth. We only allow one female in a brood pen at one time, and use galvanized iron fencing between the pens. Females will steal one another's young when given the chance causing the young animals to starve to death, and we don't give them the chance.

The skunks are perfectly cleanly about the dens and always deposit their droppings in one corner, or outside. They seldom discharge their scent and unless he were to see it, one might pass close by a skunk "ranch" and never know it.

#### Feeding.

Skunks should have plenty of food especially during the summer and they should be fed at regular intervals, giving just enough for a meal each time. It is advisable to give a mixed diet, partly

animal and partly vegetable. They will eat almost all kinds of flesh and fish, table scraps, fruits, especially if very ripe, melons, sweet potatoes, berries, etc. One of the most satisfactory foods is bread and milk, but it is considered too expensive by some people. However, it should be given occasionally. They will eat carrion, but such food should not be given, for it is likely to cause disease. In the fall especially, when they are laying on fat for winter, they should have plenty of food. In winter they do not require so much. It is a lack of meat food that causes them to eat their young and one should feed well during the spring and autumn.

Skunks feed largely on insects, grubs, etc., and if they have range enough will supply themselves with the greater portion. They are fond of eggs, either fresh or spoiled, and should be given a feed of this kind occasionally if possible. They also have a fondness for poultry.

The matter of providing sufficient food is not as difficult as it would appear at first glance. If the farm is located near a large town, butchers, hotel and restaurant keepers will generally save table scraps, stale bread, etc., on request, if one will make a regular habit of calling for it. This is why it seems desirable to establish a skunkery close to or in a city. Even in the country the neighbors will help out. The farmers will be only too glad to have you take the dead stock, poultry, etc., thus saving them the time and labor of otherwise disposing of it.

As before stated, the Laymon Skunkery is an ideal farm. We have a large range of gully land

through which runs a natural spring, and is covered with a dense underbrush. The skunk run wild here, male and female breeders after the regular rutting season is over. We feed them only once a day, at evening, and that mostly hominy hearts mixed with water and milk. Just now, June 23rd, they are as fat as prime porkers and in excellent condition. We are experimenting on cutting out all meat for at least five days each week. We maintain that 25c will cover the expense of raising a skunk to maturity. They are wild for mulberries and "roasting ears." Enjoy ripe apples and roots. Relish clover, and like cats get crazy over fish, and there is no doubt about them liking "cat meat," and the flesh of rabbits, fresh or tainted.

#### Breeding.

The mating season comes late in February and in March and the young animals make their appearance in May, the period of gestation being about nine weeks. The young are born hairless or furless, and remain blind from 4 to 5 weeks. The mother will wean her young at from 7 to 9 weeks of age. Care should be taken to note the symptoms, as when the young refuse to be weaned, the mother is likely to injure them. They are fully matured in six months, and their hides become prime and ready for market. They breed when a year old and live about 7 years.

After weaning the young should be allowed to run wild in a pen where there are other young animals. But not with the old males until such a time as they are able to protect themselves.



One male animal will easily serve eight or ten females and he should be left in their company a number of days. After that he should be removed and to make certain, another male should be installed for a few days. Two males should never be allowed in an inclosed pen with the females at one time or they will fight and one or both may be seriously injured. They seem to know enough to keep out of each other's way on the range.

We believe, however, that to allow the males and females to run wild (if the range is large enough) has a tendency to create larger litters. We believe that the females cohabit with more than one male at rutting time and that additional young are created at each service. We know that our litters are larger in number than is ordinarily supposed, ranging from six to ten, whereas when served by one as above, the litters averaged from four to eight.

Great care should be exercised in the selection of the males for breeding stock. Only the large and healthy animals of good color should be used and all others should be killed and their skins marketed, or the live altered animals sold for pets, while they are in good condition. Never allow a breeder to die of old age. Sell the pelts early and use young stock for the purpose.

While the animals do not always breed strictly true to color, the white markings may be greatly reduced and the general stock improved by selected breeding. One should, each year secure fresh breeding stock from other localities and related animals should not be allowed to breed

together or in a few years the result will be disastrous. One can not be too careful in this respect for it is very important.

After the mating season the female should be separated, placed in small enclosures and they should be well fed or otherwise they may kill and eat the young. They should be allowed to remain in these small enclosures until the young animals are large enough to take care of themselves, when they should be separated and the females may again be placed in the large enclosure.

From the commencement of the breeding season until late in the fall the animals require a larger amount of food than during the winter and especially during the breeding season and while the mother is still nursing the young they will require plenty of nourishing food. They require fresh drinking water at all times and the enclosures should be so arranged that each compartment will be supplied.

As before stated one should use care in selecting animals for breeding purposes as it is in this way that the quality of the fur will be improved and the business made to be a profitable one. If you wish to increase the number of animals do not be tempted for the sake of the higher prices realized for the finer skins to kill off animals that should be kept for breeding.

On the whole, one should study the habits of the animals on every opportunity and attend to their wants. If one will give the proper attention to the animals and take an interest in them there is no reason why he should not succeed.



## CHAPTER IV.

### Trapping, Skinning, Shipping.

**T**HE SKUNK belongs to the weasel family, and is nocturnal in its habits, but unlike other fur-bearing animals of the weasel family, lacks alertness. It is exceedingly slow in locomotion compared with other animals, and naturally falls an easy prey to the average hunter or trapper.

The only drawback and reason why this animal was not extensively hunted or trapped and the skin marketed twenty or thirty years ago, was the danger of being sprayed with their peculiar essence. The fur is fine and eagerly sought after, especially the black furred skins, which bring high prices. As many as 500,000 skunk skins are marketed in a year.

The skins are generally divided into four or five distinct grades, and each grade is then assorted accordingly to quality and size. Skunks should not be killed for the pelt out of season, but this is true of all animals, where the furred skin has a market value. The open season for Minnesota, Dakotas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Montana and northern sections, is from November 1st to February 15th, varying somewhat upon the weather. South or middle states the season opens somewhat earlier, and naturally closes on approach of warm weather. The fur of the skunk is the first of all fur

bearing animals to become prime, and is also first to suffer the loss of its lustre and primeness.

#### How to Kill Without Being Scented.

There are many ways and methods in common use for capturing and killing this animal, but probably the best is the use of steel traps, though a long stick is equally as good, providing the one who holds it comprehends his business and uses same advantageously. The author has known two lads to kill and skin forty skunks in a day. Of course, great care must be exercised to kill the animal without receiving a discharge of the perfume. A six to eight foot long stick, one and a half to two inches in diameter is the proper weapon and instrument to use in killing skunks. A smart blow on the back about one to two inches beyond the tail will readily fell the animal. This blow will paralyze and benumb the muscles and nerves employed by the animal to distribute its obnoxious fluid. An additional blow is necessary, and the latter should be given on top of the head.

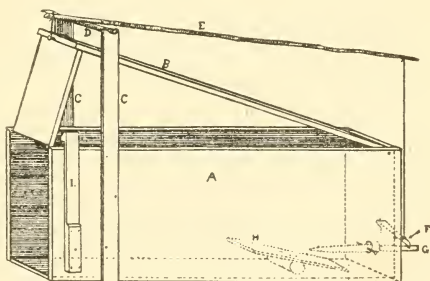
#### Steel Traps.

Steel traps are used with good effect. They should be set just before the hole and be covered with loose bits of dirt, leaves or other vegetation. Some prefer to use bait, the latter can be a beef head, a chicken, or, in fact, any chunk of old meat or carcass. Drag same in various ways and drop in a conspicuous place or in center of a nest of traps. The trap should be attached to a clog, or loose bushes, never attach two traps to the same article. Skunks often spring traps set for mink,

wolf and other animals, but seldom devour or even touch a victim should they come upon same while making their nocturnal visits.

#### A Box Trap.

The usual bait for skunk is birds, bits of meat, pieces of chicken and rabbit, whether old or fresh. A good method and trap is to bury a large dry-

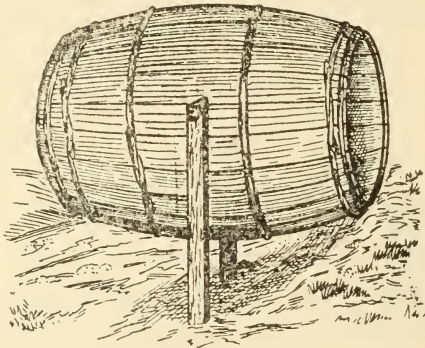


Box Trap for Catching small Animals Alive.

good box; see that the top is even with the surface of the earth, place light brushes, hay or straw across the opening, upon which sprinkle a little loose earth. Some prefer to make an artificial opening in top of box after same is buried, into which the skunk will descend, rather fall in, but cannot get out. Some strong smelling bait should be placed in the box, which is to attract the animal from a distance. As many as eight skunks have been caught during one night by the use of this style of box trap. This seems to prove that skunk do not make a noise when caught.

### A Barrel Trap.

Another method is the so-called barrel trap. A sugar, vinegar or whisky barrel will answer. Remove the head and securely fasten the bait on inside of bottom of barrel. Place the barrel in a slanting position, open part toward the earth, and



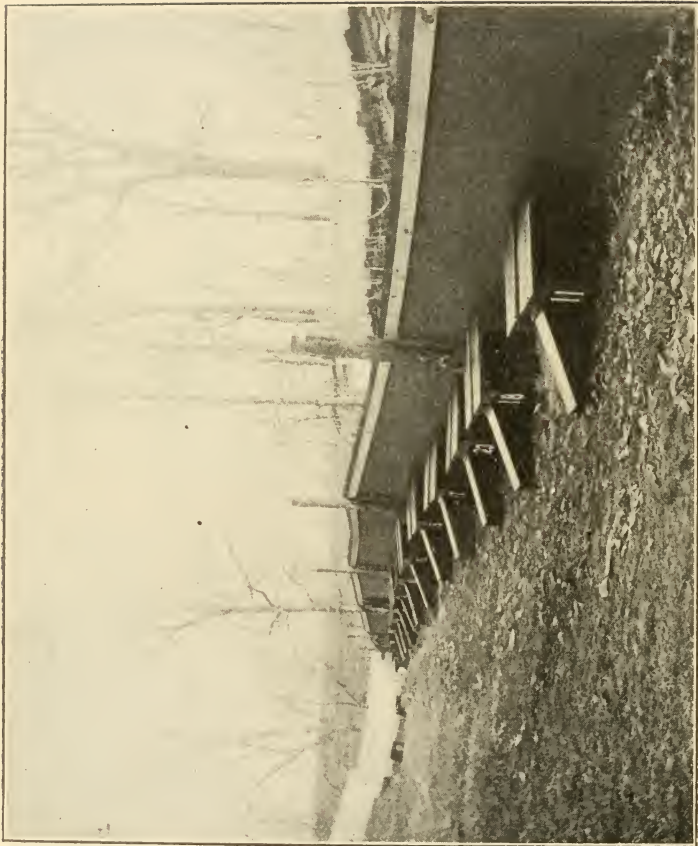
**Barrel Trap.** If Set on the Slope of a Hill, Will Capture More Than one Animal.

arrange by balancing the barrel in such a way that when the skunk enters by crawling up in a barrel, being attracted there by the bait, the barrel with the skunk will tip over and Mr. Skunk fall on his nose inside of the barrel and be a captive. This is a good and cheap trap and the victim cannot get out, though only one animal can be caught at one time. Some trappers dig the skunk out, others dig until they reach the cavity in which they usually have their nests and are found huddled up together in a bunch. If found

in such a position it is an easy matter to suffocate them, thus obliterating all possible chances of the animals distributing their obnoxious perfume. All that is necessary after one sees the animals is to cover them up with soft dirt, which should be lightly tamped every two inches of filling and continued until about fifteen to eighteen inches is securely tamped. In about fifteen to twenty minutes the trapper can uncover the den by removing the earth, and he will find the animals suffocated. After all, it is poor policy to suffocate whole dens of skunk. They should be caught alive.

It is unnecessary, but we recommend for the trapper, (new beginners) or hunters, to remove the perfume containers (glands) before skinning as one is likely to cut into the bags and distribute the perfume, but if removed all danger of coming in contact with the liquid weapon is of the past.

Skunks, when located in holes, can be smoked out or suffocated, either with common smoke or vapors arising from burning sulphur. To locate the distance of digging, insert a long switch or telegraph wire into the hole. The author has personally seen trappers dig down for a short distance and then reach after the animals with their hands, and sure enough they succeed in bringing the animals, one by one, from their den. Strange as it seems no perfume was discharged. This is probably due to the fact that the other trapper assisted by knocking them senseless immediately after their heads appeared through the hole. A piece of  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch round iron, about twelve inches in length, was used. Trappers relate and claim



A Battery of Brooding Dens on the Laymon Farm.



that it is a positive fact that the skunk will refrain from biting or discharging perfume while in their holes.

Deadfalls, figure four and other home-made traps can be employed, though the animal must be skinned promptly, and often the fur becomes damaged from the instrument itself or by long delay and exposure to the weather. There are many other methods and ways to capture and kill this animal, but by the foregoing any one contemplating to trap or hunt will have the essential knowledge.

The rifle can be used whenever possible, but the use of the shotgun is detrimental to the skin, and its use should be prevented when the question of its fur is taken into consideration. The animal should not be entirely eradicated from any particular locality, as the skunk is more beneficial than harmful to the farms, and again, the killing of skunks out of season is entirely absurd and uncalled for, the animal being harmless. The meat while not generally consumed, can be used, though when fried, it is dry and tough, resembling bull meat in that respect. The fat is used for medicinal purposes. Skunk oil is highly recommended for sore throat, croup, etc.

#### **Killing, Skinning and Stretching.**

When "killing time" comes, care should be taken to not frighten the animals left for breeding purposes more than is absolutely necessary. All animals that are tame enough should be driven into a separate enclosure and out of sight of the others before being killed. Perhaps as good a

method of killing as any is to use a good club, striking on the hips just over the region of the scent sac. Skunk should be killed without the enclosure becoming strongly scented. A pole several feet long with a strong loop on the end can be slipped over their tails. The animal can now be lifted clear off the ground and carried wherever the killing is desired. Drowning is not recommended, as it takes the fur hours to dry and is therefore extra work. Some even claim that the water spoils the luster of the fur to a certain extent.

Skunk do not leave their dens during severe weather, so that it is advisable to begin selecting those that are to be killed days and even weeks in advance of the time decided upon. These should be placed in an enclosure or pen by themselves so that the remaining ones will not be disturbed. Animals selected need not be operated upon, though the scent sac should be removed before skinning.

The animals that are to be kept for breeding purposes need not be fed so heavily during the winter months or after those that were intended for market have been killed. Of course in the spring after the females have young, they must be fed heavily.

Some raisers as soon as the young are weaned, select those that are to be killed the coming winter, keeping them separate from the breeding stock so that they can be fed properly. That is a great saving of food, as those for market should be fed much more than the breeders at this season—say during the months of September, October and November.

## Two Methods of Skinning.

There are two distinct methods of skinning fur-bearing animals, and skins are known as "cased" or "open" skins, according to the method of removing the pelt. Open skins are those removed by ripping the skin down the belly and are stretched out flat. Cased skins are those drawn off the body from the tail to the head, by ripping the skin on the backs of the hind legs.

The skunk skins should be cased. Cut off the front feet with a knife or hatchet, cut around the hind feet and rip down the back of the hind legs, using care when cutting and skinning around the scent glands. Split the tail about one-third of its length on the under side, and skin it that far by using the knife; then strip it from the bone by means of a split stick. Grasp the stick with your right hand, palm up, and with the tail between the second and third fingers, tail pointing up; hold the carcass by placing the left hand on the hind quarters; close your right hand and give a steady pull upwards and the skin will be stripped from the tail quickly and easily. Now draw the skin downward, off the body, to the shoulders. Here two thin muscles will insist on hanging fast to the skin; put your finger under them and tear them loose. You can now get hold of the front legs, and strip the skin from them. Strip the skin on down to the head, then feel for the base of the ears and cut them off close to the head. Skin on to the eyes; here you must use the knife again, but use care not to enlarge the eye aperture. Cut the skin loose about the mouth and the end of the nose, but don't cut the nose off

the skin. The pelt now resembles a small, narrow sack, with fur side in. Before you lay it down, turn it with the fur side out and thus keep the skin clean until you are ready to flesh and stretch it.

#### Skins Should be Fleshed.

The skin of any animal should be fleshed and stretched as soon as possible after it is removed from the carcass. If the weather is somewhat warm and the skin remains uncleaned and unstretched a day or two, it may start to taint.

For fleshing cased skins I use two boards, one about three inches wide and three feet long for small skins, and the other five inches wide and four feet long for larger ones. These fleshing boards must be perfectly smooth and flat. They should not be beveled towards the edge like a stretching board, but should have the edges slightly rounded.

Before fleshing a cased skin be sure that there are no burrs or other foreign substances in the fur, for such would cause you to cut the skin, then draw the pelt on the board, fur side in. Now with the base of the board resting on the floor and the nose against your chest, shove the fat and flesh from the skin with the knife or hatchet, from the head to the tail. The instrument should be held at an angle of about 40 degrees. Don't try to flesh on the edge of the board or you will injure the skin. Turn the skin occasionally until you are all the way around and the pelt is perfectly clean of flesh and fat. The thin sheet of muscle found on the back of the skunk should

not be removed, but the loose rolls behind the shoulders should be removed down to a point where it appears to be firmly attached to the skin. Don't scrape away at a skin of any kind until nothing remains but the scarf skin and the fur. There is such a thing as overdoing it, and one should remember that he is only to remove the loose parts, which are not a part of the skin. Skunk, opossum, and muskrats are the skins which are the most likely to be overdone, and the skunk in particular.

#### Stretching Important.

After the skins are fleshed they are ready for stretching. I advise the use of the three-piece board. To use the three-piece board, turn the skin with the flesh side out and insert the two main pieces of the board, the flat edges together; draw the skin down to its full extent and fasten the hind legs with two nails to each. Be sure that the skin is on the board squarely, the back on one side, and the belly on the other. then insert the wedge between the two pieces of the board. Put the wedge in firmly, but don't drive it in with a hammer, for there is such a thing as overstretching a skin. Then draw the back down and fasten it with two nails near the root of the tail. Then turn the board over, and stretch the other side, fastening it also with two nails. Now fasten all the edges by placing the nails  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or 2 inches apart, keeping the legs one-half on each side of the board. See that the nose of the skin does not slip over the end of the board and fasten the skin of the lower jaw with two nails. The tail of the

skunk must be stretched out flat as far as it is split. Now take your jackknife and make a little incision in the tip of the tail of all animals except the otter. This is to allow the air to circulate and let the moisture drain out. If the weather is very warm, put a little salt in the tail to keep it from tainting. The loss of the tail will detract heavily from the value of the skin, and in case the bone has broken off, as happens sometimes, the tail should be opened on the under side and the bone removed. After the tail is attended to, loop a string around the nails in the lower jaw and hang the pelt in a cool, dry, airy place to cure. Be sure that it swings free, and does not rest against the other skins.

A few remarks about packing furs for shipment may not come amiss. Never ship furs until they are perfectly dry for they may taint in shipping. It is not necessary, however, for the tails to be perfectly dry. Make the skins up into a nice, neat package and sew it in a burlap. Don't roll skins; pack them flat. It is best to wrap them in paper before placing them in the package. Always put a card, bearing your name and address, inside of the package to help identify them, in case the outside tag gets torn off. Put two shipping tags on each package and fill them out with your name and address in the place reserved for it. When you give them into the hands of the express company, give their true value, as near as you can, and be sure that the agent marks the valuation on the receipt. Then in case they are lost, you can hold the express company responsible.



## CHAPTER V.

### Habits of The Skunk.

**S**KUNKS are found in all parts of the United States, with the exception of the mountainous district of the West. They occur again to the west of the mountain ranges and also are found in most parts of Southern Canada. They are found in the prairie country and in the hilly and mountainous districts of the East, and are at home in the "wilds" as well as in the thickly settled districts, however, they seem to thrive best in the farming sections and especially if the country is of a hilly nature. Their dens are located along the gravelly hillsides, quite often under the roots of trees and stumps but in the prairie they den along the washouts and creek banks. In thickly settled sections they frequently make their home under houses and outbuildings, showing practically no fear of man and often appropriate the den of the woodchuck.

They are nocturnal animals and as a rule do not wander far from the den but in the fall they travel farther, looking for a good den in which to spend the winter. Again, in early spring during the mating season, the males travel considerably. While they are not a hibernating animal, they stay in their dens during cold weather, also when the snow is loose and deep, but are sure to be out on the first nice night.

The mating season of this animal is in February and early March and the young are born mostly in May, although some will be born in April. There are usually from four to ten young in a litter but occasionally there will be a larger number.

The value of a skunk skin depends mainly on its size and markings, they being graded by the buyers entirely by the amount of black fur, providing, of course, that the skin is prime and well handled.

Being slow moving animals, they can not catch the more active animals and birds as do the other members of the weasel family and their food consists mainly of mice, insects and grubs, also of the eggs and young of such birds as nest on the ground. They are very fond of poultry and frequently visit the poultry houses, killing the young birds. They also feed on carrion. When they can get it they will eat almost any kind of animal food. Even in the wild state the skunk is not, strictly speaking, a carnivorous animal as they will eat and in fact are fond of sweet corn when in a milky state, also sweet potatoes, melons and wild fruits. It appears that if the male skunk is not separated from the female at breeding time, the female will kill the male, presumably to protect her young. And on the other hand the male will kill and eat the young if given the chance.

Robert B. Phillips relates the following in H-T-T:

"I wish to relate an experience with the lowly skunk. I found some skunk signs near an old cave large enough

for a small boy to creep in. I set one trap near the main entrance and another one about fifteen feet away both fastened to clogs. (I wish to state before I go farther that the cave has a sickening sulphur smell and in the winter time, no matter how deep the snow is elsewhere, you will not find any for about three feet around the mouth of the cave.) Well I visited the traps the next morning and upon arriving at the cave I saw two skunks about twenty feet from the hole. One was eating at the hind quarters of the other. Of course I thought they were both in my traps, but when about forty feet away the victorious skunk saw me and started climbing an embankment below the cave and I noticed he did not have a toe pincher clinging to him. The skunk was only two feet from his dwelling when I made a quick shot with a twenty two rifle. Of course I missed so I knew he was gone for the time being. I went to the other one and found him breathing his last. He had his entire tail, scent glands and the meat all eaten off the bones at the junction of the hind legs and the base of the backbone. In fact the hole in the body was so large that a full sized baseball could be put into the abdomen and the skunk still had a little life in him yet. Neither of them had thrown their scent.

"Two days later I caught the other one, the largest male skunk I ever caught. When I went there he was leisurely eating a rabbit he had evidently caught. This happened in the beginning of December and both were male skunks.

"I know of another case where skunks turned Cannibalistic. This happened to some young trappers who were in the habit of catching the skunks in September and early October and keeping them until they were prime. They had eight or nine in an old spring wagon. One morning he went out to see them and found they had killed and eaten one of their own number. There are a few of those fellows around here. They are afraid another fellow might catch one or two of them.

"One time I caught a skunk and I got quite near it kept on digging in the leaves and every once in a while it would unearth a bug or insect which it would promptly devour. Some people have an idea that a skunk does nothing but steal chickens. This he does sometimes, but he makes up for that by catching cut worms and other

insects which spoil thousands of dollars worth of crops annually. I have opened their stomachs already and found centipedes and angle worms and lots of beetles in them. Skunk also loves mice."

#### Breeding.

Earl Williamson says:

"I see in the H-T-T where persons have found skunk dens with nearly all female skunks. My experience has been that in every den there is one male and two or more females; twenty-two being the highest I have ever heard of being taken from one den. The females and male den up early while the rest travel around in nice weather and stay in any hole in bad weather."

Says a Nebraska trapper: "I have seen from 2 to 12 skunk in one den, but never more than 1 male with a den of females. The males of a litter seem to be forced to leave, only one remaining. The males so treated den themselves individually at a distance from the herd of females, returning in the spring. I have never known them to use their odor in a fight among themselves, neither have I known them to make a noise other than patting on the ground with their front feet.

J. M. Bray writes of Skunk Handling:

"Norris Johnson, John K. Hallman and myself went into the ring and started the performance by taking a pair each of live skunks by the tails and holding them while the pictures were taken. Some of the onlookers thought that was wonderful the way we handled those skunks. Now, right here is where I want to say that you can do it just as well as I can, if it is necessary for you to handle them. Go to them with a quiet, but firm step; take a good hold on their tails and you can carry them anywhere you want to. I have had a number of inquiries whether my skunks were odorless. I will say they are not and it is not necessary to make them odorless. If you use them gently you can have them around for a year and no one would know that you had them. Some ask, will black skunks breed all black, or will some breed back into liwer grades? It is a known fact that all animals will breed back sometimes, but by having black you will breed

black. But I find by having black bucks and by having short stripe females (and no threes or fours) your breed will be from fifty to seventy-five per cent black, or No. 1.

"Some have asked me what to feed them. Skunks will eat anything that a cat or dog will eat, also various fruits, such as apples, pears, persimmons, sweet corn or field corn (so long as the grains are soft). Where you have a number you will have to figure on the feed. Skim milk and stale bread, butchers' scraps, meat from dead animals, dead chickens or anything of that nature, but it will be necessary to vary their feed occasionally.

"If you start with a pair or so for an experiment you do not need such a large enclosure, but if you want to make a business of it, then I would advise you not to be afraid to spend a few dollars on your pen and the larger the lot the larger the pen. Don't crowd them or you will be the loser."

Skunk have no means of defense other than their scent, but this is sufficient in many cases and the majority of people will give them a wide berth. This scent is only used when alarmed or frightened and in captivity there is no trouble whatever from this source as they soon learn that there is no occasion for alarm and become quite tame.

#### CULLED FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

"While trapping this last season I caught a skunk each night for three nights in succession at the same den and the three brought \$12.00 which I thought was pretty good for three skunks out of the same den. I have caught as high as eight skunks in one day."—Lee Guthrie.

"Skunks can be raised as easily as house cats, providing you have an enclosure where they cannot dig out or climb over. For every hundred old skunks, you should have an acre of ground enclosed.

"I experimented for three years on a small scale. The first year I had one male and three females. They brought forth fifteen young. One died, plus four old ones, leaving

eighteen—eleven females and seven males. Five of the young graded as No. 2, balance star black.

"The second year I started with twelve females and two males, bringing forth forty-three young, plus fourteen old ones, total fifty-seven, less three, which died, leaving a balance of fifty-four. I took out seventeen males and five No. 2 females, leaving a balance of thirty-two black ones."—I. M. Bray.

"When cold weather comes the female dens up and with very few exceptions does not stir until mating season which is in February. Trappers will tell you that fully 90 per cent of the November, December and January catch are males. After February 10, when the running season is on the catch is largely females. At this season a skunk tracked to its den and dug out has often resulted in as many as eight or ten. These are mostly females."—H-T-T.

"In regard to the habits of skunk in the Elkhorn River District, Nebraska, will say they usually den in old badger holes, cleaning them out in the fall, sometimes making a cavity in them 2x3 feet by 18 inches high, preferring hilltops, bluffs and slough banks as situations. Sometimes they dig dens themselves, seldom going over 1 foot below the surface. The cavity is bedded 6 inches deep and the hole about half filled with dry grass."—Nebraskan.

"Farm readers, please don't kill the skunk during the summer when his hide is worthless, because he got a chicken or two, but wait and take his hide in the winter. It will more than pay for the chicken if you really must rid your back woods of him, why not take him with box traps and start a fur farm?"—Peerless Bum.

"John M. McCrary asks if we have ever heard a skunk make a noise. I can answer that by saying positively yes. I have two male skunks together in a pen and we have been awakened every night about 10 o'clock by their hideous squeals. They seem to be very congenial during the daytime," says Harold Pugh.

Probably the sound you think so hideous is sweet music to the skunks. However, it may be their war cry. If you would watch them and study their habits, especially at night, you might make some valuable contributions to our knowledge of skunk habits.



"Why don't all of you fellows start a fur farm? It will be the most paying business in the country pretty soon."—Albert C. Hancock.

"The natural habits of the skunk is to live in holes in the ground, rocks, trees, stumps, etc. Their food consists of mice, birds, bugs, crickets, grasshoppers, bees, wasps, yellow jackets, angle worms, seeds, berries, ground roots and barks."—Bureau of Agriculture.

Beyond all doubt the skunk has been given more consideration by raisers of fur-bearers than any other animal, with the exception of the fox. There are many who have tried raising these animals with more or less success and where the experimenters have used good judgment and have given the subject all of the attention it deserves, they have been reasonably successful. Most of these people have started in on a small scale, having perhaps only a dozen or two of skunks to start with; in fact nowhere has the business been carried on as extensively as some newspaper articles would lead one to believe; the majority of these parties having at the most only two or three hundred animals.

It is the smaller experimenters, in other words those who have begun on a small scale, who have been most successful. They are for the most part farmers who had even before venturing into the business a fair knowledge of the nature and habits of the skunk and therefore were more qualified for making the business a successful one. Farmers naturally take an interest in all nature and are most likely to give the proper amount of attention to the animals, also learn their habits readily and act accordingly and these qualities are absolutely necessary for the successful raising of all fur-bearing animals.

## CHAPTER VI.

### Miscellaneous Information.

**T**HE most successful stock breeders are those who make a special study of their animals and take a great interest in them and those who do not are almost certain to fail and really deserve failure. If so much care is necessary in breeding domestic animals, how much more important the care in handling the wild creatures, knowing so little of them as the average man does. But even handicapped by lack of knowledge the experimenters have been fairly successful from the start if they were right men for the business. Without exception they all report that the animals breed well in captivity and are easily kept; in a short time becoming quite tame and losing their fear of man.

The skunk is an animal which is despised and feared by many people because of its readiness to make use of its powerful scent, the only means of defense with which nature has provided it, but it is only when frightened that it uses this scent and once they have become tame and learn that they will not be harmed they are practically harmless. We will say, however, to those who are afraid of the scent, do not attempt to raise skunks, but devote your time to some other calling for which you are more fitted. But if you want to make clean money, raise skunk.

### Removing the Scent Sacs.

It is true that the scent glands may be removed from the young animals and we can see no reason why this should have any effect on their breeding.

The operation is easily performed and if done when the skunks are very young, about the time they first open their eyes, they are seldom harmed by it. The operator should provide himself with an old bag, and seated on a low bench with the bag between his knees should place the animal in the bag, leaving only the hind quarters uncovered. With a small, sharp knife make a  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch incision over the gland, and with an awl lift up on the gland, which at that age will be about the size of a cranberry, at the same time pressing down gently on the surrounding tissue with the flat side of the knife. The gland will lift up readily. Then holding it with the awl, cut it through the center, allowing the remaining half to return to place. The reason the entire gland is not removed is that it is firmly united to the rectum and the animal is likely to be seriously injured if one attempts to remove the entire gland. All of the scent, and only half of the gland is necessary. Following is a more detail description of the operation of removing the scent sac:

#### Description of The Scent Glands of The Skunk.

The annal glands which are possessed also by other members of the weasel family are developed in the skunk to such a wonderful degree as to constitute an effective means of defense. They are not related in any way to the genito-urinary sys-



Laymon and Assistant Removing the Scent Sac.

tem either in location or function. They are the same in both sexes.

The scent fluid which is the special secretion of these glands is contained in two sacs located beneath the skin, one on each side of the vent. Each sac is embedded in a powerful, gizzard-like, muscular envelope the contraction of which discharges the scent fluid. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 show general location and form.

Within the rectum just beyond the sphincter muscle which ordinarily keeps the vent closed are two papillae from which the scent is discharged. Each papilla is connected with one of the scent sacs by a discharge duct.

Ordinarily the discharge papillae are not visible but when the skunk discharges the scent fluid the tail is raised and doubled close along the back, the vent is relaxed and turned outward to such an extent that the papillae becomes external and from them the scent is discharged and directed with remarkable accuracy.

The skunk takes great care not to get any of the scent on its tail or fur and the slightly skunky odor which fur garments sometimes have is usually the result of carelessness in killing or skinning the animal. To kill without scent the backbone should be broken by a quick blow or the skunk should be drowned.

When held by the tail with head hanging down and with tail and backbone in a straight line the skunk cannot control the muscles which evolve the rectum and discharge the scent. Care must be taken that the skunk does not twist or climb upward. It should be held low to keep its interest

centered on the ground which it will strive to reach.

**Directions for Removing the Scent Sacs From Live Skunks  
Without the Escape of Any of the Scent Fluid.**

This operation is simple and may be readily learned by anyone who will follow these instructions carefully. No anaesthetic is needed.

1. The beginner should dress in old clothes or overalls and as a precaution should wear goggles to protect the eyes in case of accident. An old hat or a paper sack worn as a cap will protect the hair. With these safeguards the learner feels perfectly at ease and therefore the chance of accident is much lessened while acquiring proficiency.

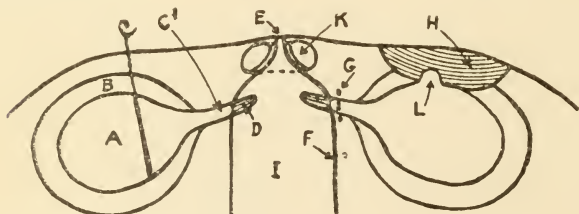


FIG. 1, X-RAY OF SCENT SYSTEM.

2. A heavy plank supported on two wooden buckets makes a good operating table. Straddling this plank the operator and his assistant sit facing each other.

3. The proper instruments are as follows:

1 nickel plated scalpel (knife).

1 nickel plated tenaculum (hook).

1 nickel plated sound probe (probe).

1 pair nickel plated special extracting forceps.

1 pair nickel plated automatic clamping forceps.

2 pair goggles (worn only by beginners as safeguard).

4. Several pieces of clean white cloth about three inches square should be provided.

5. The instruments should be boiled about ten minutes in clear water to insure cleanliness. During the operation



they should be kept in a saucer containing a five per cent solution of carbolic acid which may be placed on a box within easy reach of the operator's right hand.

6. The operator first takes his seat and spreads a gunny-sack or burlap across the plank just in front of him.

7. The assistant then brings the skunk carrying it by the tail with his right hand. His left hand should grasp the nape of the neck to help keep the head down for the back-bone and tail must at all times be kept in a straight line.

8. The assistant now, by means of his hold on the nape of the neck brings the skunk into a horizontal position (keeping the backbone and tail in a straight line)

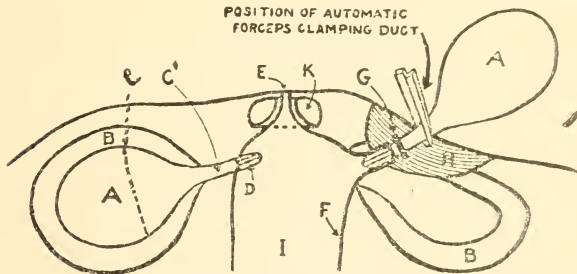


FIG. 2, SECTIONAL VIEW OF SCENT SYSTEM.

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| A—Scent Sac         | H—Original Incision |
| B—Muscular Envelope | I—Rectum            |
| C—Discharge Duct    | K—Sphincter Muscle  |
| D—Discharge Papilla | Encircling Vent     |
| E—Vent              | L—Scent Sac Pushing |
| F—Wall of Rectum    | Through Incision    |
| G—Cut to Sever Duct |                     |

and lays it belly downward on the gunny-sack with head toward the operator.

9. The operator wraps the gunny-sack snugly about the skunk while the assistant releases his hold on the nape of the neck.

10. The assistant now immediately places the fore-

finger of his left hand with light pressure over the vent, while the operator proceeds to turn the skunk on its back keeping the gunny-sack wrapped firmly about the animal.

11. Now only the tail and butt of the skunk are exposed to view. The gunny-sack covers all four feet and head so there can be no scratching or biting.

12. The operator brings his knees together over the plank and thereby holds the skunk. This enables him to have both hands free.

13. The operator now relieves the assistant by placing the fore-finger of his own left hand over the vent. With the thumb of the same hand he locates the scent gland just to the right of the vent. The gland is easily recognized as feeling hard and round like a marble beneath the skin abreast of the vent, neither forward nor backward from the vent.

14. Having the thumb and fore-finger about an inch and a quarter apart the operator now squeezes the gland tight enough to draw the skin firmly over it. His right hand is free.

15. With a piece of cloth dipped in the carbolic solution he moistens the fur and skin held between his thumb and finger.

16. With the scalpel, starting at least three-eighths of an inch from the vent so as not to injure the sphincter muscle which encircles the vent, the operator makes an incision through the skin about five-eighths of an inch long directly over the center of the scent gland and in a straight line with the vent, as shown at H in Fig. 1.

17. The incision is now carefully deepened until the firm, gizzard-like envelope in which the sac lies is reached. The beginner is likely to mistake this firm, muscular envelope for the sac itself because the envelope is lighter in color than the tissues previously cut.

18. He now proceeds more gradually to cut through the muscular envelope as shown at H in Fig. 2, taking light strokes with the scalpel and cutting only a slight depth each time.

19. If the muscular envelope cannot be held firmly enough by the pressure of thumb and finger so the knife will cut well the muscle may be hooked with the tenaculum and thus held by the assistant while the operator cuts.

20. Soon a small white bead appears in the bottom of the incision as shown at L in Fig. 2. There is no mistaking this as it is the white sac itself pushing through a very small opening which has been made through the envelope.

21. This opening is now carefully increased by turning the dull side of the scalpel toward the protruding sac and cutting away from it, first on one side and then on the other.

22. The sac keeps pushing outward more and more until it is about the size of a pea. The cutting is then stopped.

23. Now by means of the extracting forceps the sac is gradually lifted by raising it a little on one side and then on the other. The object is to work the sac through the small opening without tearing it by too violent a pull and without lacerating it by gripping too hard with the forceps. The proper way is to grasp lightly and pull gently here and there at its base.

24. When half the sac has been worked through the opening the sac suddenly pops up out of the gizzard-like envelope.

25. The sac is now lifted carefully by the extracting forceps to see that it is all clear and attached only by the discharge duct.

26. If any slight muscular tissue is found clinging to the sac it may be torn away with the sound or tenaculum or carefully cut with the scalpel.

27. The duct, which alone holds the sac, is now clamped in the automatic forceps as near the sac as feasible as shown in Fig. 3.

28. The assistant now holds these forceps and thus supports the sac so the operator can see the duct clearly.

29. The operator then carefully examines the duct preparatory to cutting it. He must be very sure not to cut it too close to the rectum or he will cut a round hole in the rectal wall because even a slight pull on the duct draws the discharge papilla outward and brings with it the wall of the rectum wrapped about the papilla so as to look like a continuation of the duct. See C, Figs 1, 2, 3.

30. By feeling carefully with the sound or the dull side of the scalpel the end of the papilla nearest the sac is readily discerned by its firmness or hardness.

31. The duct is now severed with the scalpel at a point a little way from the papilla as shown at G in Fig. 3.

32. The sac is now held free in the clamping forceps and not a particle of the scent fluid has escaped.

33. The operator then proceeds in the same manner to locate and remove the second sac.

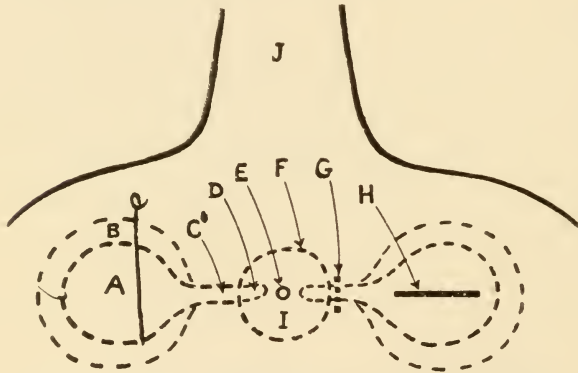


FIG. 3, SAC COMPLETELY WITHDRAWN.

- |                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| A—Scent Sac         | F—Wall of Rectum         |
| B—Muscular Envelope | G—Cut to Sever Duct      |
| C—Discharge Duct    | H—Incision to Expose Sac |
| D—Discharge Papilla | I—Rectum                 |
| E—Vent (Rectum)     | J—Tail                   |

34. The incisions should be wiped out with a piece of cloth with carbolic solution and never need any further attention. In a few days not even the scars can be found.

35. The operation is performed most easily when the animal is not too old or fat. Any time from one-third to two-thirds growth is a good age for this work.

36. With a little practice the complete operation of removing both scent sacs should not take over five minutes or skunks may be handled at rate of ten or twelve per hour.

The removing of the scent sac has increased the value of No. Four skunk. Many are sold as pets, and others used for advertising purposes. We do not go to the trouble of removing the sac on animals we know we are going to kill soon. There is no danger of scenting when the skunk is carried suspended by the tail.

Those who have failed in skunk raising were for the most part people who knew nothing regarding the habits of the animal and its care when in captivity. They were men with capital, who began on a large scale expecting to make a fortune in a short time, but in this they were mistaken, for many of them lost all that they invested. These parties have had trouble from the older animals killing and eating the young, also deprivations of owls, but mainly from the first reason. It is our opinion that this cannibalistic tendency is caused by improper feeding, as those parties who have used care in that respect have had no trouble whatever.

To those who are thinking of embarking in the business of skunk farming, we would say—start on a small scale with only a small number of animals, say two dozen females and six males. Give them every possible attention and study them under all conditions. Do not expect to make a fortune in a short time.

#### Laws Affecting Fur Farming.

One of the most frequent questions that we are called upon to answer is "Will the laws of this state allow of keeping fur-bearing animals in captivity?" This question has caused considerable

trouble, for in states where fur-bearers are protected a part of the year, it is usually considered unlawful to have the live animals in possession during closed season, but not always so.

Only one state, namely New York, has laws making it a misdemeanor to have protected fur-bearing animals in possession during closed season. In that state it surely would be unlawful to raise skunks, for the law, after giving the open season on these animals says: "They shall not be possessed or killed at any other time." It is our opinion that the fur-farmer would not get into any trouble with the law, in any state other than New York, if he would kill the captive animals only during the open season for the said animals, since the game laws of no other state say that you may not have the animals in possession. Still there are fur farms in the state of New York.

You are obliged to comply with rules and regulations of the Conservation Commission of New York. You should write to this commission at Albany, New York, and get their instructions and permission. Fur farming laws and game laws covering this subject are confused and unsatisfactory. Fur farmers are likely to find that much depends on the disposition of local game protectors, and should get in touch with them and with the state authorities, especially a state like New York.

**Dye Markings to Denote Sex—Toe Clipping to Denote Age.**

We have installed what we consider a very handy system of skunk labeling on our farm. For



instance we mark the male skunk with a red mark perpendicularly across the white markings in the head. If he is "altered," this mark becomes a cross. With the female it is blue mark—if "altered," the mark becomes a cross. To denote the age we simply clip a claw each year at a certain time. The unclipped animal is less than a year old. We seldom keep them over five years as breeders. Usually sell the pelts during the fourth year. The system seems to work out very satisfactory.

#### A Simple Fur Press.

Take a box with a bottom the size you wish the bottom of your bale of furs to be and turn it bottom side up on the floor near the wall. Then spread a piece of burlap over it large enough to hang over the edges a little all the way around. Then lay on a piece of heavy brown paper about the size of the burlap. Then lay on your furs in a flat, square pile, the same shape as the top of the box. It is a good plan to brush the hair all out straight and smooth as you lay them on. Lay them on until you have them thick enough so that when pressed down they will be as thick as you want your bale. Then lay on another piece of paper and burlap about the size of the ones on the bottom.

Then lay some short pieces of board crosswise under your lever. Then nail a cleat to the wall the same distance from the floor that the top of your bale will be when pressed. Then take a piece of good solid board or anything handy that may be used as a lever and lay across the top of the

bale, catching one end under the cleat on the wall and pry it down and weight it or have some one hold it for you while you fold the edges of the paper together smoothly and the burlap in the same way, folding the corners in neatly. Now you can sew these edges together with some good stout cord and release your lever, tie on your shipping tags and you will have a neat secure bundle, all ready for shipment. The bundle may be strengthened by putting a good stout cord around it lengthwise and crosswise twice. This makes something to get hold of when handling it."—L. Dewey.

#### Live Skunks Can be Shipped by Express.

Skunk skins or live skunk will not be carried by parcels post. Live skunk in the past have been transported by the express companies usually at regular merchandise rates, and the occasional shipment of these animals when well caged and protected did not arouse any great comment.

Owing to damage incurred, on April 1, 1913, the express companies took concerted action and passed a joint and official amendment with the concurrence of the Interstate Commerce Commission, reading as follows: "SKUNKS—Refuse." This made it impossible to ship live skunks by express after that date. There was naturally a protest to the express companies by skunk breeders, and by those accustomed to shipping live skunks. The express companies finally agreed, however, to accept for shipment skunks from which the oval glands had been removed. The ruling on skunks was therefore with the approval of

the Interstate Commerce Commission changed to read, effective May 20, 1913, as follows: "Skunks—Refuse, unless scent sacs are removed."

All the express companies concur in this ruling, even the Canadian Companies. This means that shipments can be made between all points in the United States or Canada. The removal of the scent sacs is easiest at the age of five weeks, although it can be done at any time. It does not seem to injure the skunks in any way or to interfere with their breeding.

In shipping skunks from the United States to Canada there is no duty, but, in shipping from Canada to the United States the duty is 20% of the invoice price.

At the time of shipment, write a letter to the fur company, that you are shipping to, advising them of the shipment, and telling how you are sending the furs, and just how many and what kind of furs you are sending. If you follow these instructions, you will seldom have any cause for complaint.

## CHAPTER VII.

### Questions and Answers.

**A**S we are asked certain questions so often we are pleased to give below answers to those most frequently received:

**“What is The Best Way For Me to Start Raising Skunks for Fur?”** Start with a few and increase the number as you can care for them. Dig out or capture a couple of litters this spring. Mate the males of one litter with the females of the other litter. There are usually eight to ten young in a litter. The old skunks mate about March 1st and the young are born about May 1st. Never inbreed; that is, do not mate related animals. Furs are becoming scarcer and prices are continually advancing. Those who start early in this industry will make the most money.

**“How Can I Breed For Black Skunks?”** Each year save your largest and blackest skunks to breed from. Market the skins of all the rest when prime. Be always on the lookout for blacker specimens, especially males. You can mate one black male to four or five females and even if the females are not entirely black there will be a good percentage of black among the young.

**“What Should I Feed Skunks?”** Skunks in confinement will eat meat of any kind, bread, milk, whether sweet or sour, many sweet fruits, green corn and some other vegetables. Table

leavings from hotels, waste from slaughter-houses, dead farm stock or dead chickens are all eaten readily and take the place of the beetles, grubs and mice which the skunk lives on when free. Do not give decayed food. Supply fresh water regularly.

**“I Live in Town; Can I keep Skunks Without The Scent Disturbing My Neighbors?”** Yes. You can remove the scent sacs from your animals. This is very easy to do and the skunks do not mind it at all. They do not lose a meal. After the scent sacs are removed they can never scent again. Your neighbors will not know you are raising skunks unless you tell them.

**“How Long Does it Take to Remove The Scent Sacs?”** With a little practice you can remove the scent sacs and make a skunk forever scentless in four or five minutes, or at the rate of 75 to 100 skunks per day.

**“Does Any of The Scent Fluid Escape When Removing The Scent Sacs?”** Not with our method. With proper instruments you can remove the scent sacs completely without spilling a drop of the scent fluid.

**“How Can a Skunk Be Tamed?”** The skunk is naturally gentle and not much afraid of people. When the scent sacs have been removed from a young skunk it will be found at once quite tame and may be carried about in your arms like a kitten. If it is handled frequently it will grow up very tame, will come when called and will eat from the hand.

**“Are The Scent Sacs The Same in Both Sexes?”** Yes, they are the same in both sexes. They

open into the rectum and are not related in any way to the reproductive or urinary systems. The scent fluid is not the urine as many people imagine.

**“What Do You Pay For Black Skunks?”** We pay from \$5 to \$15 each for grade AAA according to time of year, locality and size. The scent sacs must be removed. We pay express charges on all skunks which we buy. If you have any choice specimens you wish to sell write us full description and we will gladly make you quotation. We want 500 skunk now.

**“What is The Best Age For Removing The Scent Sacs?”** This work can be done at any age easily unless the skunk is very fat. We strongly recommend that you begin on young skunks in the spring, any time after the eyes are open. The young skunks are easily weaned. They readily take milk or bread and milk and do not need the mother. Do not let them run with old skunk.

**“What Kind of Fencing Do I Need For Skunks?”** Poultry netting 2 to 3 feet in the ground and 6 feet above ground makes the cheapest fence. To prevent climbing out make at the top an over-hang of netting 12 or 18 inches wide or place a strip of tin about 18 inches wide on the inside of the fence near the top to make it smooth and slippery. The netting should be 1½-inch mesh for the main yard (for adults) and 1-inch mesh for the breeding pens. The best fencing is made from galvanized tin or galvanized iron, in our opinion. Read chapted on “Enclosures.”

**How do you grade Skunk?** Personally I think the eastern assortment best; which is as follows:



“Eastern Assortment. The average size, ordinary color of fur, prime or unprime pelt is considered, then graded to No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 or No. 4 grade. On skunk for illustration: the short shoulder stripe is graded as No. 1 when prime and full size, the object of this assortment is as few grades as possible, prices quoted will not permit of as high quotations as firms quoting Western Assortment, but will figure equally as much if not more, in dollars and cents.”

The Western Assortment is as follows:

“Western Assortment. Each pelt is graded to its individual value, first color, then size, primeness, etc., as high as thirty grades are used; skunk for instance is graded for black, short narrow and broad, then as to size and shade and color, etc., each commanding a different value. A firm using this assortment can quote most any price if they desire and have their goods just as cheap, if not cheaper, than those using eastern assortment only.”

**“Where can I sell skunk grease and what does it sell at?”** There is a small demand for animal oils and grease, but the markets shift from point to point. You will have to get in touch with these markets through drug stores and doctors who know addresses of chemists and dealers in drugs. There are many by-products of the trap line which trappers should study, to see if they could not work them into commercial lines. Animal oils are one of these by-products. I think that skunk oil, under a fancy name, scented with a little musk or perfume, would find ready sale for chapped hands, sunburn, etc. These oils are

usually wasted now;. There is an opening for a dealer in animal oils if he knows the users.

**“When is the best time to trap Skunk?”** In cold weather, when fur-bearers den up and hibernate, trappers smoke out more animals in one day than they can take in traps in a month; besides, they get prime fur worth the most money. Still we do not advocate this method. They should be captured alive for breeding purposes.

**“What do you consider a good scent for skunk.”** Anise oil, as a rule, is best for skunks. Apples are good skunk bait and meats also are good.

**“Can you tell me the best method of removing skunks from their dens?”** It depends on the den. Dig ‘emouts, who use shovels, or dynamite, or crowbars, destroy the dens. There are bellows and smoke blowers for smoking out the occupants of dens, and the makers would tell you the best ways. However, as a sporting and financial proposition, you would better get your skunks by straight trapping or snaring, instead of killing off whole families as you would do rading dens. When you track a skunk to its hole, use the smoker, but don’t hog the fur. Leave breeding stock for another year.

**“Is it advisable to flesh and scrape skunk hides down to white skin before hanging up to dry. Can you tell me why dealers do not want fur hides salted, say, salted slightly, and if any, what detriment it is to them?”** The clean skin is best. All fat and flesh should be removed, care being taken not to break into the skin, nor should the skin be “worked” or drawn too much, in the process. Of course, skins may be cleaned on the

boards. The salt dries the skin and hardens it, making it brittle and likely to crack. Its action on the skin is not neutralized, as in the tanning processes by other chemicals. Even a little salt changes the skin, absorbing the moisture and changing the chemical constituents of the hide. The best way to preserve fur skins—salt is simply to prevent decay—is to clean the skins carefully and stretch on frames or boards, and hang them in a cool, dry, sheltered place where rodents and insects cannot get them. Of course, pelts should not be left too long on the stretchers—a few days—and too much care cannot be taken of them.

**“Does it spoil fur keeping it through the summer if kept moth proof and in a cool place?”** Not if it is properly dried and protected from moths. Some of my friends keep their late catches of fur in perfectly tight paper baks, with tobacco, holding them over for the early winter or before-the-London-sales prices. A big slump in the fur market is often met this way on certain kinds of fur by trappers, but the fur must be properly dried and carefully stored away from insects, mice, etc.

**“Will it do to breed to the same male continually?”** We do not advise it. Young stock from foreign pens should be constantly added to improve the grade. Inbreeding should be avoided.

**“How can live Skunks be shipped?”** If the scent sacs have been removed you can ship a skunk by express in a box with wire netting over the opening. If the distance is great, supply plenty of dog biscuit or dry bread and a dish for

milk. Mark on box, "Please give milk and water." If the weather is cold make a nest of straw in one end of box.

**"Can I make any money by removing the scent sacs from Skunks?"** Yes, you should be able to sell the first skunk you operate on, even if striped, for at least \$5 to someone who would like it as a pet or as a curiosity. A tame skunk will draw big crowds when placed in a store window for advertising purposes. Amusement Parks are glad to get them. Money can be made by selling tame skunks or by operating for other people.

**"What diseases are common to the skunk?"** They are practically a diseaseless animal. True they are troubled with lice when kept too closely confined and fed too much spoiled meat. Any common poultry powder which will destroy poultry lice will destroy skunk lice. Change dens and allow the animal to burrow in gravelly earth. Meat diet sometimes causes scurvy. This can be avoided by feeding a variety of foods.

**"How do you prevent infection after removing the scent sac?"** First wash the parts with a weak carbolic solution taking care not to allow the solution to enter the rectum, or better still paint the glands with iodine before operating. Rub over the incision a composition of turpentine and lard. This will repel flies.

**"What do you do with the young after weaning?"** We allow the female to range, and also the young, but in separate pens. Do not make the mistake of allowing the young ones to range with aged males until they are able to protect themselves from injury.

# INSTRUMENTS

## WITH WHICH TO REMOVE SCENT SACS

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**S**O many persons have written us to know if we handle instruments suitable to perform the operation of removing the scent sac, that we have consented to make a selection.

The proper instruments are as follows:

- 1 nickel plated scalpel (knife).
- 1 nickel plated tenaculum (hook).
- 1 nickel plated sound probe (probe).
- 1 pair nickel plated special extracting forceps.
- 1 pair nickel plated automatic clamping forceps.
- 2 pair goggles (worn only by beginners as safeguard against scent fluid unexpectedly entering the eyes).

These tools are of a high grade of steel and nickel plated to guard against rust. A very handy and desirable set of instruments. One set (as above) packed securely in box, sent by prepaid parcels post for only \$3.00. The most satisfactory set of instruments on the market. Your order solicited.

References: Exchange Bank of Spencer.

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**THE LAYMON FUR FARM CO.**  
**SPENCER** **INDIANA**





PEN OF WHITE RUNNERS AS BRED AND RAISED BY JOHN F. CRANE, SPENCER, INDIANA.

If you want to start right, with foundation stock, or eggs from as good as there is in the country, write me—same prices at all times for stock and eggs—134 acres devoted to raising poultry, fruit and ponies—Breeder of White Indian Runners, Fawn and White Runners—White Wyandottes and Barded Rocks. Write **JOHN F. CRANE, Box A1, SPENCER, IND.** me.



# WANTED

## 500 Live Skunk

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We are in the market for 500 A A A skunk, males and females for breeding purposes. We pay as high as \$15.00 for altered, unmaimed stars. Write us what you have.

We also handle skunk pelts, Eastern grading, and highest prices paid for prime stock. Let your dealer quote, then you will understand how much better we can do for you.

Write first. We pay express charges.  
Reference: Exchange Bank of Spencer.

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The Laymon Fur Farm Co.  
SPENCER - - - - INDIANA

*What a big Money King says about*

# **OPPORTUNITY**

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“IT isn't the want of opportunities, nowadays, for making a man wealthy, but it is his **recognizing** an opportunity when he meets it in the middle of the road in the middle of the day.”

He is right. Paste **that** fact on your memory now. I know from experience.

And if you are a business or professional man or woman, or working on a salary and desire to increase your earning power with the least outlay of capital and with the least effort, look this skunk proposition squarely in the face.

And look at it from the viewpoint of good common business sense. It is a clean, legitimate proposition—a real money-making opportunity right “in the middle of the road in the middle of the day.”

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**? Why Not Start ?**  
**? a Skunk Farm ?**

WE WOULD BE GLAD TO HELP YOU

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