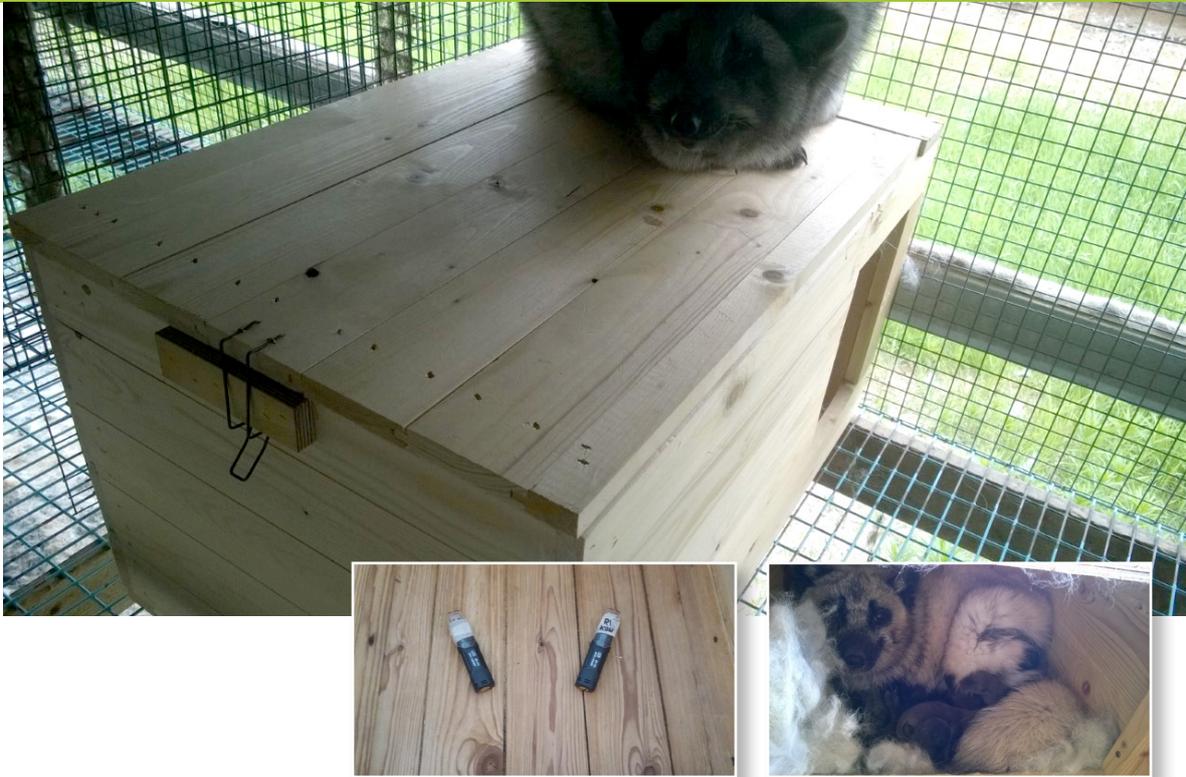


Testing the whelping environments at Luova



The high rate of puppy mortality is a great contributor to economic losses on fox farms.

There are tests being done at Luova Oy's research facility in Kannus, which purpose is to examine the possibility of various whelping areas that could help prevent the high puppy mortality of blue foxes. The test has four groups, and in each group there are 24 blue fox females. The blue fox females in group 1 are residing in default nest boxes, ie. nest boxes of wood that are often found on regular farms. These serves as the "control group" in the test. Group 2 also has the standard nest boxes, but without a lid, to promote air ventilation. Group 3 also has normal nesting boxes, but the difference to the control group is the water nipple located next to the feeding the board, which is located as close to the nesting box as possible, to facilitate the puppies and the mothers access to water. The fourth groups nesting boxes are much larger in size compared to the standard nesting boxes, and the point of this is to see what kind of effect a larger environment has on the puppies' survival. The puppies

that are born in the experimental groups are counted immediately after birth and further again when they are three days-, a week-, two weeks- and five weeks old, and even in connection to ablations. In the spring of 2015 different models of nesting boxes, and their effect on the mortality of puppies, were tested at Kannus research facility. The cool spring however, gave a much higher puppy breeding performance than in years. This observation further confirms the positive effect of the cool conditions at whelping time, and therefore it was considered necessary to repeat the experiment next year, when there is a new opportunity to study the effect of the spring heatwave on pup mortality in different whelping areas, in the case that the spring in 2016 and the beginning of summer are warmer than previous years. The nesting boxes this year are also different models compared to the ones used in the tests last spring. In the test we are also using temp-loggers for monitoring the different temperature in different nest boxes.