

On March 31, Secretary Udall announced the award of a 5-year contract to the Fouke Fur Company of Greenville, S.C., for the processing and sale of seven-eighths of the sealskins harvested during the years 1963 through 1967. At the same time, he said the Department would use one-eighth of the sealskins harvested during that period for experimental processing contracts with other interested firms. The contract with the Pierre Laclede Fur Company is the first of its kind negotiated by the Department.

The Pribilof Islands are the only breeding grounds of the Alaska fur seal herd, which numbers between 1,500,000 and 2,000,000 and represents more than 80 percent of the world's fur seals. The young are born each summer on the rocky beaches. In the fall, after the breeding season, the seals return to sea.

Other seals of the same species breed at rookeries on islands off the coasts of Russia and Japan. These rookeries are administered by the Soviet Union.

Experts consider the present size of the Alaska herd ideal for its survival and well-being. Each year, the United States harvests about 70,000 surplus young animals, of which about 50,000 processed pelts are sold for the United States account. In 1963, gross sales of sealskins brought \$6,066,268. Alaska receives 70 percent of the net proceeds from the semiannual fur seal auctions.

Under terms of the North Pacific Fur Seal Convention of 1957, Canada and Japan each receive 15 percent of the annual separate harvests of the United States and the Soviet Union.

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