



U. S. Department of Agriculture
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Release -- Immediate

AMERICAN BUFFALO ARE INCREASING

Agricultural Bill Passed by Congress Provides for
Disposal of Surplus to Public Institutions.

Provision is made in the current agricultural appropriation act for the Secretary of Agriculture to give buffalo to municipalities and public institutions from any surplus which may exist in the herds now under ^{the} control of the Department of Agriculture. In order to aid in the propagation of the species the bill provides that animals may be lent to or exchanged with other owners of American bison. No provision is made to give them to individuals, and only one may be given to each municipality or public institution. This provision is made because of the surplus of bulls in some of the Department of Agriculture's buffalo herds, particularly the one in the Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve, in Oklahoma, and because the department is nearing the realization of the first stage in the preservation of the specie -- the acquisition of at least 1,000 head of buffalo by the Government.

There are approximately 7,000 buffalo in North America. Canada has something over 3,500, and the total number in the United States is more than 3,000. This is about seven times the number in the United States in 1889, when the first buffalo census was taken. Individuals in the United States own approximately 2,000 of the total number in this country. There are eight Government herds, six of which are under the control of the Department of Agriculture. The largest herd in this country is in charge of the Interior Department and is located in the Yellowstone National Park, where there are about 450 bison. The Smithsonian Institution now has a herd of 18 at the National Zoological Park, Washington, D.C.

The first herd of buffalo under the Department of Agriculture was established in 1906 on the Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve. The original herd consisted of 15 animals, the gift of the New York Zoological Society, and this has now increased to more than 100 animals without any outside additions. Two herds have been established in the past year, one in Sullys Hill Park, North Dakota, the other in the Pisgah National Game Preserve, North Carolina. The other herds supervised by the Department of Agriculture are located in the Montana National Bison Range; the Niobrara Reservation, Nebraska; and the Wind Cave Game Preserve, South Dakota. ~~The plan of the department is to establish at least ten herds widely distributed, in order to prevent the spread of any contagious disease, should it become uncontrollable in any of the herds.~~