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ALASKAN REINDEER INDUSTRY
MAKES RAPID DEVELOPMENT

The reindeer industry in Alaska promises to become a big factor in the development of the territory, and should be encouraged in every practicable manner, in the opinion of the authors of a new United States Department of Agriculture Bulletin, No. 1089, Reindeer in Alaska, by Seymour Hadwen, veterinarian and parasitologist, and Lawrence J. Palmer, in charge of grazing investigations.

The number of reindeer in Alaska has increased in 30 years from 10 animals imported in 1891 and other importations totaling about 1,200 animals prior to 1902, to approximately 200,000 living reindeer. Probably 100,000 additional animals have been killed for food and clothing. The original importations were made by the Bureau of Education for the benefit of the Eskimo natives, who still own most of the herds; but white men have gradually acquired stock, and under their management both their own herds and those of the natives should improve.

It is estimated that grazing areas in Alaska will support from 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 head of reindeer, but the development of the industry requires white supervision and modern methods of handling live stock, with proper markets, improved transportation and cold storage facilities, and many changes in existing regulations relating to ranges and ownership. Company herds are

advocated, in which ownership of does shall be the basis of dividends and cost assessments.

Grading Up Herds.

The experiment of crossing reindeer does with caribou bulls is contemplated for grading up the stock and increasing weights. Old, scrubby does and bucks must be eliminated and better bucks must head the herds to increase the average size of the fawns. White reindeer are deficient in vitality and size, and while an aid in locating a herd are undesirable and should not be permitted to breed.

Many unsatisfactory practices in handling reindeer herds should be dropped. Some of these were introduced by Lapps, brought over with the original importations to teach the Eskimos how to manage their herds. With the increase in the number of reindeer there have appeared various parasites and diseases which require expert treatment by trained veterinarians, in place of the crude methods now practiced.

Reindeer meat is at its best in the autumn, and the time for slaughtering is October and November. Earlier than this the back fat is not fully laid on, and later the parasitic larvae depreciate the value of the meat. The custom has been to slaughter on the open range at any time of year. Reindeer meat is very palatable, resembling beef in flavor and texture, and it is believed that a market can be developed for it.

The bulletin includes a comprehensive list of Alaskan range plants and much other detailed information of interest to those considering the commercial possibilities of reindeer grazing as an industry. Copies may be obtained by applying to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.