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BIG GAME ANIMALS ESTIMATED
ON 159 NATIONAL FORESTS

More than 687,000 head of big game animals make their home on Uncle Sam's 159 National Forests, announces the Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, which has just completed the compilation of a count made in 1924.

Compared with the previous year the 1924 figures represent an increase of about 44,000 head after due allowance is made for 44,300 head of bear which were not included in the estimates of former years but which are included in the 1924 estimates.

Forest Service officials explain that this increase may be caused by the fact that 1924 was a very dry year in the West and that the drought conditions resulted in an unusual concentration of game animals around watering places which enabled the Forest Rangers to make closer estimates than in former years. It is also explained that only animals using National Forest ranges are included in the estimates and that no account was taken of animals which graze almost entirely on adjacent Federal lands or on privately-owned areas.

Deer represent the vast bulk of the big game animals with a total for 1924 of 550,500 compared with 511,200 last year. An analysis of the figures shows that except in a few National Forests located in California deer show a uniform increase. These few exceptions, say forestry officials, may be the result of closer estimates rather than any real decrease in number.

The five States credited with the largest number of deer are, in the order of their rank, California, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and Arizona. Alaska, also, is credited with about the same number - 50,000 head - as the two last named States. More than half the deer listed on the National Forests in Arizona inhabit the Kaibab Forest. Efforts are now being made to reduce this Kaibab herd since the amount of forage available is insufficient to support it.

In the 1924 estimates bears were included as game rather than as predatory animals. The figures showing 44,300 head on the 159 National Forests. Of this total 38,700 were of the black and brown varieties, the balance of 5,600 being grizzlies. Nearly all grizzlies listed were found on the two National Forests in Alaska alone. Montana is the only State in which the Forest Rangers were able to find more than a scattering few of this bear.

Elk have increased in all western forests, more than 52,600 head being listed for 1924 compared with 49,500 in 1923. On the Teton National Forest bordering the Yellowstone National Park the elk herd has shown a notable increase because of three excellent seasons with mild winters and satisfactory summers. Forest Service officials are again facing the question of keeping this herd down to a number that can be supported by the available forage.

Antelope Herds Are Scarce

Antelope, or pronghorns, are still in a very unsatisfactory condition. The 1924 count shows only a few more than 5,000 of these animals, most of which are to be found in the National Forests of Arizona and Idaho. In northwestern Nevada and southeastern Oregon there is a large antelope herd grazing on public lands outside the National Forest areas. An effort is

being made to secure the creation of a game refuge which will cover the habitat of this herd so that it may be saved from extermination.

The number of moose found in 1924 shows a loss compared with 1923, only 5,100 head of these magnificent animals being shown last year compared with 8,000 in 1923. However, it is explained that this difference in figures may be attributed in large part to more accurate estimates. The number of mountain sheep and mountain goats on the National Forests is given as 12,400 and 17,200, respectively, a slight increase over 1923. Buffaloes were dropped out of the 1924 estimates as these animals are now to be found only in protected herds.

In discussing the 1924 estimates of big game animals officials of the Forest Service say that the figures turned in were carefully checked and that the estimates are considered as accurate as such figures can be made where an actual count is not possible.