



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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TWO WILD ELK START TRIP TO ARGENTINA

Two wild elk, a male and a female, will leave their traditional range in the mountains of Oklahoma tomorrow (Monday, October 7) on the first lap of a 6,000-mile trip by rail and steamer to Argentina, where the big-game animals will be exhibited in the Buenos Aires Zoological Gardens, it was announced by the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior. The Service is donating the 2-year-old animals to the zoo.

Captured on the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge near Cache, Oklahoma, the elk will be crated and shipped to New York City by rail. They are due to arrive in New York on Thursday (October 10) and will be transferred to a steamer sailing for the South American city on Friday (October 11).

Careful preparations were necessary to insure safe passage of the elk on their long trek below the equator. Special crates were constructed to prevent the animals from injuring themselves during the trip. Their horns were cut to about 6 inches above the hair. The cutting was painless, it was explained, because at this time of year the horns are hard and insensitive to pain. Elk shed their horns annually.

Because the animals must pass the equator to arrive at their destination, officials had to consider weather conditions in selecting the animals and the time for the trip. The elk were taken from the Oklahoma refuge because of the 266 national wildlife refuges administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service this is the southernmost area on which elk are found. During fall, it is said, weather in the torrid zone is least likely to affect the animals.

Since no attendants will accompany the elk to South America, officials of the Fish and Wildlife Service worked out a special diet schedule. Alfalfa hay, grain, and water will probably be the principal ingredients in the daily rations.

Each elk weighs about 350 pounds, but within 2 or 3 years will grow until each weighs between 475 and 500 pounds.

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