INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

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BEGIN RESEARCH ON MINKS TO HELP FUR FARMERS GET BETTER BREEDING RESULTS

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To help fur farmers get better breeding results with minks the U. S. Biological Survey and the Carnegie Institution of Washington have begun a cooperative research project for obtaining more complete information on the reproductive cycle of these fur animals. Minks are raised in large numbers commercially, but on many fur farms difficulty is experienced in obtaining successful results during the limited breeding season of 3 to 4 weeks in spring.

Dr. Robert K. Enders, of the department of zoology, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa., will engage in this research, having been named a biologist of the Survey beginning February 1, under an allotment by the Secretary of Agriculture from the Bankhead-Jones special research fund. Doctor Enders is now a collaborator of the Survey in fur resources investigations and has already begun preliminary work on this project. He will conduct his investigations at the embryological laboratory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md., using material supplied from the U. S. Fur Animal Experiment Station, Saratoga Springs, N. Y.; the fur animal field station at the Blackwater Migratory Bird Refuge, Cambridge, Md.; and the Patuxent Research Refuge, Beltsville, Md. Work at all of these areas is directed by the Biological Survey.

"The available information on the reproductive cycle of the mink as well as that of many other wild fur animals," says the Survey, "is meager. Practically all that is known has been learned by observing living animals. Basic data are needed

to give mink farmers a more certain foundation for managing their animals during the breeding season. Such information also will be useful in planning programs for conserving minks in the wild."

An attempt will also be made to determine the cause of the wide range of the gestation period in minks, which seems to vary from 40 to 60 days. The animals will be given glandular extracts and the results studied. Success in these experiments, it is pointed out, may increase fertility among confined minks, as this condition appears to be associated with the functioning of internal glands that produce certain hormones -- secretions that affect the development and functioning of cells in other parts of the body.

Doctor Enders has been granted sabbatical leave by Swarthmore College to engage in these investigations. He is a native of Essex, Iowa, holds B. A. and Ph. D. degrees from the University of Michigan, and has served as assistant professor at Union College, Schenectady, N. Y., professor and head of the department of biology at Missouri Valley College, Marshall, Mo., and mammalogist of the Ohio State Conservation Commission. He has also engaged in research work for the National Research Council, the National Association of Audubon Societies, and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

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