

POOR DOCUMENT M C 2 0 3 5

THE EVENING TIMES AND STAR, ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, AUGUST 20, 1921

THE GROWTH OF CANADA'S FINE BUFFALO HERD

Started in 1908 With 740
Animals, They Now Total
Over 5,000—Wool, Meat
and Leather Experiments
Now Being Carried Out.

J. B. Harkin, Commissioner of the Dominion Parks Branch of the Canadian Department of the Interior, in a bulletin of the American Game Protective Association, states that Canada's buffalo herd, started a comparatively few years ago with a small number of animals, has greatly increased. Several small collections of animals, aggregating about 740, were placed in Buffalo Park, Alberta, extending from 1908 to 1912. That herd now numbers over 5,000. An actual count was very difficult to make, because the animals range over 100,000 acres. They always go in small bunches and do not make any very outstanding efforts to facilitate a count. However, by using hotel dining room counters a fairly accurate idea of the numbers of the animals were obtained.

The Commissioner says that these animals have become very numerous, primarily because of the natural conditions under which they live, but perhaps most of all because there is practically no diminution in their numbers through disease or anything of that kind. Each year a limited number are killed for various purposes, but as far as mortality from natural causes is concerned, the loss is practically nil. For instance, during the past year, 1920, only eight animals were found dead on the prairie, or with a broken leg or some other serious injury, making it necessary that they be slaughtered. Continuing, the Commissioner says:

"The numbers have been increasing so rapidly that we have been compelled to look forward—I might almost say—the commercialization of the herds. The establishment of that herd in the first instance was purely a matter of sentiment, but investigations we have been making would rather indicate that, as very often seems to be the case, what we started off to do from a purely sentimental standpoint may prove to be a valuable commercial proposition. For instance, there is a market for the herds—apparently a better paying market than we had ever anticipated. At the Montreal fur action sales of last year we had on sale a limited number of mounted heads

which brought as high as \$1,025 each. That was a surprise to us. The lowest price brought was, I think, \$225. "Our robes, we find, are worth easily an average of \$100. Then we have the meat value, and we also have the hide value. There has not been very much experimental work in converting hides into leather. We have had a number of hides tanned for sole leather purposes. The reports which we have had in regard to its quality as sole leather are not uniform. The shoemakers, however, tell us that it is the very best kind of leather, because, while it gives strength and thickness, it also gives greater elasticity than the ordinary domestic animal hide. "The meat, we think, will also give us a very valuable return commercially. We are not yet in a position to put it on the market, because we have not the facilities in the way of corns, sorting pounds, &c. But we are gradually getting these, and we think we will get a substantial revenue from the sale of the buffalo meat. "There is also a possibility of commercial development in the matter of the wool. It would be a difficult, if not impossible, thing to do with the facilities that we have at our disposal. But each Spring the buffalo shed their wool, and we have our riders collect this wool off the prairie. We have it carded and spun, and it gives us a wool of extraordinary strength. I do not think it could be used in the manufacture

ture of clothes or anything of that kind, but I imagine if it could be used in the manufacture of carpets you would have an article that would almost never wear out. A buffalo hide is practically as good as ever after it has been in use twenty years; the outstanding feature of the buffalo robe has always been its extraordinary wearing qualities. "We have not yet carried on experiments with respect to the domestication of the animals. This will probably be done. We are carrying on experiments with respect to cross breeding of buffalo. We have reasonable expectations that we shall be able to produce an animal which will be able to range in the open all Winter many hundred miles beyond the present limit for the domestic animal. There experiments are carried on by the Department of Agriculture, which has experienced veterinarians and animal husbandmen. We hand them over the animal and give them the use of the necessary amount of ground. They have specimens of one-half, one-quarter, one-eighth, and I think, one-sixteenth of buffalo blood and sometimes the reverse in the case of the domestic animal. "The work is largely in an experimental stage, but the animal husbandmen are optimistic in their views as to what the results of these experiments will be. The director of the Dominion Experimental Farms visited Buffalo Park last Fall at the end of a year which had been marked for its adverse drought conditions in our Western



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country. He told me that he had carefully wintered in stables a herd of domestic cattle which he then brought in the Spring to Buffalo Park for this purpose. He had hand-fed them in order that they might be in strictly first-class condition, and in the Spring they were turned out with the other animals. "Now, the two herds of cattle and buffalo had roamed the prairie all Winter without any attention, and in the Fall the buffalo and the cattle were in strictly first-class condition—very much better condition than the cattle, which the director had turned out in first-class shape. He said also that he drove around the country for miles to see the ordinary domestic herds, and invariably he found that their condition did not compare with the condition of the cattle and the buffalo. This is a very important consideration, because we hope that the crossed animals will extend our grazing area some hundreds of miles into the North.

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RUSSIAN RATS MARCH WEST, Medical Authorities Fear Plague—Rat Swarm All Over Europe.

Berne, Aug. 20.—The plague of rats and mice in Europe is far more grave than originally supposed. The plague extends throughout Central Europe. In Czechoslovakia mice have destroyed whole corn fields. Denmark, which is plagued with rats, offers a large reward for each dead rat. In Germany, most parts of which are plagued with rats or mice or both, some towns have organized systematic campaigns against them, Leipzig alone having voted 40,000 marks for this purpose. In one small section of Switzerland in three weeks 40,000 mice were captured by school children with traps.

Rats are marching upon the continent from Eastern Russia, and it is feared that they may bring plague with them. Authorities are taking every precaution to avoid such disorder.

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Aln't You Coming Out? Malinda? Van and Schenck	Van and Schenck	\$1.00
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