



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of Information

Press Service



Release - Immediate.

July 2, 1929.

ALASKA PROVIDES FUNDS FOR
CONTROL OF PREDATORY ANIMALS

An emergency appropriation of \$30,000 for suppressing predatory animals in Alaska was recently made by the Territorial Legislature because of the increasing numbers and depredations of coyotes and wolves there. The measure also authorized the employment of two expert leaders of the work, these men to be trained and recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture as experts in the suppression of predatory animals, and, to carry on control operations under the direction of these leaders, four hunters and trappers.

A cooperative investigation made by officials of the Territory and of the Bureau of Biological Survey demonstrated that the predatory-animal situation in Alaska is rapidly becoming acute, particularly because of the phenomenal increase and spread of the coyote. The first coyotes were taken about a dozen years ago near the international boundary, having drifted into Alaska from the Yukon Territory. Coyotes now are found in large numbers throughout the eastern portion from the Porcupine River on the north to the Kennicott and McCarthy region on the south. They have drifted westward to the Kenai Peninsula, to the headwaters of the Kuskokwim, and to the reindeer grazing areas near Norton Bay. Wolves also are steadily increasing although somewhat more slowly than coyotes.

Investigations have shown that coyotes are preying heavily on the fur bearers and on the caribou of Alaska and have entered the ranges of the mountain sheep, where they are killing great numbers of these big-game animals. Coyotes are found also preying heavily on migratory birds on their lesser breeding grounds of the Upper Tanana and Yukon Rivers. The coyote is now within a few hundred miles of the breeding grounds of the Yukon Delta, and depredations on migratory birds will undoubtedly be considerably greater if it continues drifting westward.

In many cases a family or entire colony of foxes are run out of their dens and killed by coyotes, which then use the dens themselves. It has been possible to trace the advance of coyotes by the marked decrease in the number of foxes, and local trappers have noted this with considerable dismay, for they are thus deprived of a valuable source of livelihood.

Unless checked, the spread of coyotes in interior Alaska may well be expected to continue until these predators occur over practically all the Territory. The Biological Survey states that at present their numbers are still less per unit of area than in the more heavily infested of the western range States. Investigations made of the extent of damage reliably attributable to coyotes in Alaska, however, make it appalling to conjecture what their depredations might be in a few years if the present rate of increase and spread should be allowed to continue.

In the Mount McKinley National Park it was found that wolves had recently commenced to kill game animals, with the result that the latter are becoming wilder and not so easily approached by park visitors. During the past winter five wolves killed more than 500 reindeer near Unalakleet. The owner of a herd of several thousand reindeer that range on the tundra on the mainland near St. Michael reported that during the winter of 1927-28 two wolves killed approximately 200 reindeer and that 40 of these were killed within a period of a few days.