

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS



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ORDER 30 GREENLAND MUSK-OXEN  
FOR INTRODUCTION INTO ALASKA

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An order for a herd of 30 musk-oxen, to be obtained in Greenland and introduced into Alaska, has recently been placed with an experienced collector by the Bureau of Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, pursuant to an appropriation by the last session of Congress of \$40,000 for establishing an experimental herd of these animals in the Territory. They will be delivered in New York, whence they will be shipped under the care of a representative of the Biological Survey, via Seattle, Wash., to Fairbanks, Alaska. They will live in a large inclosure set aside by President Hoover for use in investigations of reindeer and musk-oxen, and will be cared for by men acquainted with the peculiar problems of feeding, breeding, and management of animals under Alaskan conditions.

This action marks the culmination after several years of efforts to acquire a herd of musk-oxen for Alaska for experimental purposes, with a view to their domestication and utilization. Such action has been advocated by many interested individuals as well as by the Territorial legislature.

Musk-oxen, says the Biological Survey, resemble small-sized buffalo, and are the most truly Arctic of all the large mammals occurring in North America. Prior to about 1800, they existed in goodly numbers in northern Alaska, but are now entirely extinct there, as a result of indiscriminate killing by explorers, traders, and natives equipped with rifles instead of the primitive bows and arrows formerly used. They have persisted in limited numbers in northern Canada, eastern Greenland, and some of the Arctic islands, and are protected in Canada on several reservations established by the Government.

Musk-oxen on exhibition in zoos in New York and Washington have proved to be gentle and easily tamed. Musk-ox meat, when properly dressed at the right time of year, is of excellent quality and similar to beef and buffalo meat. Information obtained in range investigations by the Biological Survey indicates that the forage on the treeless Alaskan plains where musk-oxen once roamed is suitable for them. Musk-oxen kept in captivity have thrived on hay and on carrots and other root crops. Hence their domestication in Alaska is thought to be possible. Their introduction there will restore a meat-producing animal that can utilize natural forage and cultivated foods different from those consumed by reindeer, the Biological Survey believes.