

Niobrara Reservation
In Nebraska

P.O. Valentine, Nebraska
July 25th 1928

Bureau of Biological Survey
P.G. Roddington, Chief
Washington D.C.

My Dear Sir

In accordance with custom I herewith submit Report covering the year From July 1st 1927 to June 30th 1928.

The big game animals have increased or decreased as follows"

	On hand July 1 st 1927	On hand June 30 th 1928
Bison.	80 head	90 head
Elk,	100 "	106.
Antelope	10	10
White-tail Deer	1	1.

The For the year, two were lost from accidental causes, and the twelve calves for this spring comprise the changes in this tally. 87 of this number is in the herd in the large pasture and three at Headquarters in the small pasture. They are in good condition. But not over fat, They are healthy and active. There are considerable number of large bulls now in evidence which causes more fighting and probably losses from killing will increase, When the herd went across river all old bulls remained on this side and but young ones went over.

The condition of the range is good, No depreciation is indicated, except bare acreage at places where they congregate. The herds are arriving at that point however, where one dry winter, followed by a dry summer, would deplete the grass, so as to cause planning to get hay over to them, for the winter to follow. We will have plenty hay for such an emergency but expenses will be heavy, to move it across.

It is apparent that when the Government realises, the herd must be reduced in numbers and quickly, they will note that the elk her

for revenue and ease of disposal is primary.

The ELK.

Thirteen head were dressed and shipped to fill demand for such meat, from Public Markets, Isa ac Walton League banquets, Holiday feasts and private parties, Satisfaction over the quality of meat sent out, continues, due to our policy to send young meat. We have established a good reputation,

Any plan for disposal of surplus elk is remote by eighteen months and elk should be killed and sent out dressed meat, next winter to the full extent of the demand without restriction to numbers. If policy prefers to dispose of elk alive it should not be adhered to until you are in shape to handle alive. For this herd will mount up in numbers, causing heavy feeding expenses, before you are in shape to ship live elk,

Of this number, three are in small pasture at Headquarters, the balance in the large pasture across River,

The

Antelope.

Present much detail for study. Three young for an increase this spring and three for a loss last winter. It is a fact that in this small pasture but one male will be tolerated. Most of the time of the older male is occupied in the summer, in chasing about the pasture, the younger male of three years old. And yet for the past three seasons, when there has been but one male and five to six females, there has resulted but one pair of young each year.

It appears to be the life destiny of the female antelope to rear their young and then give up to the winter and perish, At least by autumn, the mother antelope are in very poor condition, with no pick up even with the grain ration, and they succumb to the first severe cold weather and snow. I do not believe the quality of the grasses in this region are sufficient to meet their requirements and yet we have in the antelope pasture, all the grasses of the region and in abundance. Have read some records of the "old Timers" in central Nebraska, and they state that antelope were plentiful in this section for spring and summer, but moved westward for their autumn and winter range. That appears possible,

Wild

Turkeys.

Have been reduced this spring to two males and two females, It was found that as per former years, they returned inside the antelope pasture to make nest. The place where they were penned on arrival from Wichita Forest. As soon as the young can fly good and are half grown, they all leave over the fence. Yet some instinct brings them in return with the spring. Have not accounted for one of these two hens yet, But found one hen with four half grown young, a few days ago. The other might be setting on a bunch of spoiled eggs, yet, and might not. Indirect reporting of turkey killings by residents continue to come in, And persons here will take the remaining turkeys in time, In spite of other popular interest in the experiment,

If another shipment is made I should like to intrude with some suggestions for making the crates, and also wish to inquire if it is possible to capture them at the Wichita, without first establishing the grain feeding habit. As urged before if another bunch is sent, I would liberate them over in the center of the big bison pasture on north side, close to the Beaver Cabin,

Grouse, Are still a rarity, Not having recovered from the
Prairie Hen reported diseases of two years ago. I do not
Quail. believe there were fifty chicken and grouse on the
reserve last winter, and I do not believe there are
more than that now, The grass is too tall just at present to determine
local hatchings but haying operations will inform us,

Quail are slightly more abundant than last year. With another mild winter they will be back to normal. But it is a discouraging quail region, They are so up and down in numbers from year to year, Exactly like the varying hare of the North,

The attached clipping from our local periodical indicates a movement of much meaning. Referring to the future the best chance for these species will be on large tracts, and in this central western Nebraska, where such large tracts will continue to exist. The most advantageous chance, from a Federal outlook is on the large Forest reserve tracts situate south west of us, Does this problem of the preservation of the species, prairie hen and grouse, impress them as important with their opportunity?

Predatory In this term I refer only to the coyote, The chief concern Animal, is the antelope pasture close to Headquarters, and while we have to date with devices and preparation kept all coyotes out of this pasture, we cannot keep an occasional bob- cat out, It would be therefore a satisfaction to have what few coyotes removed from this vicinity, as obtainable, by an experienced trapper, each autumn, But as for the larger pasture on north side of River, Do you have any data that would lead you to consider the coyote in that pasture is a menace to the antelope small elk calves? Provided their more natural food such as prairie dog, gopher, is somewhat common?

Climate. Last winter was mild as for snow fall but cold in temperatures Ample moisture has occurred to keep up average records with normal farming crops and hay, characteristic of this zone.

Improvements Are at the minimum due to a close run to maintenance only, with no permanent improvements planned. General maintenance has been satisfactory, comprising repairing to old buildings, and to fences and roads, and culverst, As we are using mostly old buildings, they suffer from the heavy winds,

(Improvements) There was one detail of a flood gate and woven wire repair where the big fences takes the crossing on north side over Big Beaver Creek. This had but a temporary fix following the bad damage of May 1927 and in October, we adjusted it proper. In addition there were three special jobs required by the Years allotment, that were completed and placed in position, Viz, A flood gate crossing for big fence at upper Little Beaver, A piece of Snow fence 190 ft long to protect big fence from snow drifts, at a selected place, and Some new sign boards to erect at entrance with a repainting and retracing of letters on old sign gates, The metal signs about the Reserve were also replaced last autumn, October 1927.

Hay Sales The hay in stack was abundant for the winter but marketing prices low, and sales dragged. We have some stacks left, and many other hay stacks in this territory. We had such a mild winter that not much forced feeding of stock was necessary by the ranchmen,

Revenues Sent in from sale of hay amounted to \$ 360. Other revenues sent was a grazing fee of \$10.50 \$ 4 . from sale of old elk horns, and \$ 650. from disposal of surplus Elk,

The hay situation at present is satisfactory. There will be abundant cutting for all our possible and anticipated needs. Occasional showers with heavier rains are resulting in a fine growing season.

(Fred M. Dille)

July 25' 1928

Reservation Protector.