

H97-66-21
Irving Reed
Fairbanks, Alaska
September 23, 1965

Irving Reed has been a resident of Alaska since May 1900 and a resident of Fairbanks since 1924. He is married with three children. He will be talking about the reintroduction of musk ox into Alaska.

Siberia and North America was connected by a land bridge. When the glacial age tied up the water the land bridge was exposed again. The musk ox was an inhabitant of this area. There were several species. They were in Alaska until guns were introduced. The last one was killed at Point Barrow in 1865 according to Charlie Brower. The last herd was wiped out in the Chandalar in 1897. Henry Appel was going up the Yukon to the Fortymile and heard about a musk ox in the 1890s. He studied musk ox and in 1921 he interviewed the director of the Brooklyn Zoo. The zoo had two musk ox bulls. He was on the Alaska Game Commission. A congressional party came into Alaska and had a meeting up at the university. In 1929 he advocated getting the musk ox back into Alaska.

Congress appropriated 2500 dollars to start the program. They brought in 32 animals that were Ward's musk ox. It is smaller than the Canadian type. They came from the east side of Greenland. They were all young calves that were brought in. They were here until 1936. Larry Palmer and Jack Warwick were in charge of them. The Bureau of Biological Survey was the group that had them and that group became the U.S. Fish and Wildlife. The musk ox were then moved to Nunivak Island. It is a government reserve. They thrived on the island. Musk ox will eat anything and thrive. They are a goat. The real man who has worked on them was Teal. He formed the Northern Agriculture Experiment Company and spent five years studying the musk ox. He went up to Canada and captured five or six. He took them to Vermont to raise.

Irving said the meat was good, but the real value is the wool of the musk ox. Teal has done a lot of work with the musk ox. He considers them intelligent and they are easily tamed. Reed talked about Mrs. Fohn-Hansen's work with the wool and their value.

Someone asked about the yaks in Healy.

Irving explained that the wool is shed in a blanket. They do not shear them. It is gathered once they shed.

Someone asked how the musk ox were transported from Greenland to New York by boat. They then traveled by train across country.

The bulls weigh about 900 pounds and the females weight about 700 pounds. They don't know about their life span. He didn't think they had any scent to them in spite of their name. He said wolves are predators of musk ox.