

RAISING BEARS BY HAND -

The
Unique
Employment Of
An Akron, O.
Man.



He Became "Bear Meat" When
Nine Months of Age.

RAISING bears by hand—such is the unique occupation of a man in Akron, Ohio. He is R. H. Lodge, and he stumbled into the business by accident. A number of years ago a friend presented him with a bear cub that had been picked up along the shores of Lake Superior. He got another cub to keep this one company.

Now, for eighteen years Mr. Lodge has been raising bears. In that time he has learned considerable that is interesting about their

life and habits. More to the point than anything else, he has found out how to care for their young. Breeding of bears in captivity is proverbially difficult.

Numbers of bears raised at Akron have been sold to zoological gardens in different parts of the country. Sometimes, also, Mr. Lodge regales his friends upon feasts of bear meat.

So unusual is his success that the United States Government has issued a monograph upon his methods.

BLACK bears comprise the interesting ursine family that Mr. Lodge has collected. With the grizzly giants of the Rocky Mountains, they are typical of the original bear families of North America.

Exceedingly difficult to raise in captivity are they. Mr. Lodge has succeeded, where nearly all others have failed—by following as closely as possible to natural conditions.

While such conditions include all the freedom that is possible—sunlight and open-air exercise in the summer—they also mean dry, warm quarters for the hibernating period of the winter months.

It was through no intention of making money that Mr. Lodge began to raise bears. But, having begun, and appreciating the possibilities of the business, he has continued it.

Eighteen years ago A. C. Kendall, proprietor of a large feed store in Cleveland, and a close friend of Mr. Lodge, presented him with a female cub.

The animal, a mere wile, had been captured on the north shore of Lake Superior by a company of hunters. When taken to Mr. Lodge's place, at Silver Lake, near Akron, she was so small that a half-gallon pail was used as her bathtub, her head just appearing above the rim.

This bear still lives as the great-great-grandmother of the family at Silver Lake. She has brought twenty-five cubs into this troubled world, the majority of them living to reach the adult stage.

Soon after her captivity began, Mr. Lodge purchased a consort for her. He also has lived to the age; but he always failed to show the proper maternal instincts that seem necessary in the raising of a family.

This paternal bear has always presented a decidedly grumpy and unfatherly disposition. In fact, he would kill his offspring whenever

possible. Their cunning tricks never appealed to him. If he felt in an ugly humor he would strangle his own children as quickly as he would those of his neighbor.

Constant watchfulness on the part of Mr. Lodge and his sons prevented such tragedies as a rule, however.

Equally important was the matter of providing proper winter quarters for the bears. By the middle of December they are accustomed to retire to their hibernating caverns for the cold months.

Mr. Lodge dug dens in the side of a hill at the pits and filled them with straw. He was careful that the dens should be dry at all times, and that the animals should be kept warm and free from drafts.

All the conditions of natural hibernating places were provided.

Each pit is twenty feet in diameter and twelve feet deep, with the brick roof rising about three feet above the surrounding surface. Composed of terra-cotta blocks set in cement, the floor slopes toward the entrance, in order to insure drainage, which is further improved by a gutter running from the entrance.

Leading to the pit, is a brick-lined passageway ten feet long and six feet high. This is provided with inner and outer gates of iron grating, and affords a chamber to separate the bears from the main pit when desirable.

Two retiring dens are excavated in the bank, each about five by six feet and four feet high. These are probably ten feet beneath the surface of the ground, are lined with brick, and connect with the pit by a 24-inch circular opening.

The entrance passage is provided with a similar but somewhat larger retiring den, with a ventilating shaft in the top, while the only opening in the others is that leading to the pit.

For cleanliness the pit is frequently washed by



means of a hose, and when the retiring den is cleaned the bears are confined in the gateway passage.

Seemingly as pleasing to the bears as their natural dens in the forest are these rudely-made quarters. In them they set up housekeeping in their own way.

They like to furnish their quarters themselves. About the middle of November the keepers provide a quantity of dry leaves and straw. The bears drag this material into the inner dens and arrange it to suit themselves.

When the hibernating period arrives, about the middle of December, they have warm, dry and snug quarters ready in which to sleep away the winter months.

Another considerable element in the success of Mr. Lodge has been the careful dieting prescribed for the bears.

In the spring plenty of green food is fed to them, such as dandelions, clover and other food that they would get if running wild. During the

summer acorns, apples and sweet corn are relished by the bears. Acres of sweet corn are raised, and what is not utilized by residents at the summer resort nearby is fed to the bears. Watermelons are always a favorite food.

Sweet corn, dried and kept over winter, is fed to them after the animals come out of hibernation, and they thrive on it. This, with sweet parsnips, is the first food given the animals in the spring.

Successful hibernation is one of the most important ends to be attained. As cold weather approaches, the bears, then all well grown, take on large quantities of fat, as is their nature; but to enable them to become fat they must be fed well and carefully.

The young of the Lodge colony have been born, almost without fail, between January 1 and 27. The first sign of their birth is apparent from a whimpering through the ventilator in the pits. But the owners of the animals are compelled to be patient until spring, when the bears come out of their dens. Only then may knowledge of the number of young be secured. This is not until early in March.

Offspring of the original pair secured by Mr. Lodge have been born as follows:

January 23, 1892, one male cub; January 24, 1893, two males and one female; January 23, 1895, one male and one female; January 24, 1896, two males and one female; in 1897, one male, exact date of birth not noted, but between January 21 and 27; January 24, 1898, one male and one female; January 27, 1899, three males; January 26, 1901, two males and one female; January 21, 1903, two males and one female; January, 1905, two males and one female.

In all, thirty-three new arrivals have joined the colony since it was founded, and all but six of these reached ursine manhood and womanhood.

Present permanent members of the colony consists of one male and three females. The young bears of this year and several of former years are also in the dens.

The young are surprisingly small when born, their weight being only nine to twelve pounds. They do not open their eyes until they are a month old. At first they have short, velvety hair over their bodies, little like the heavy coat which they later acquire.

The greatest difficulty in rearing bears in captivity is, not to feed them properly so much as to prevent the mother from killing them after they have been taken from her. She is a model mother so long as the young are under her care; but, once separated from them, she often seems to acquire an aversion to them. Yet it is necessary to separate them if the old ones are to be mated again.

As an instance of the matricidal tendencies of the mother, two cubs were removed from the old female of the colony in May, 1898, before proper knowledge of the animals was acquired by Mr. Lodge. He put them together again in October of that year, after first keeping only a grating between them.

When the cubs and the mother got together the older bear caught the one cub by the head and killed him, and only by force was she prevented from climbing the tree of the pit and killing the other cub also.

At no time can the bear father be trusted with his children, as he is apt to kill them upon the slightest provocation.

Arthur B. Baker, a government expert who has investigated the Lodge method of propagating bears, attributes the success of the plan used, not to any one feature, but principally to the large amount and the character of uncooked vegetable food used, the opportunity for isolated hibernation in snug, dry dens, and the manner of treating the mother and young.

Possibilities of accident must be guarded against with bears almost as with children.

About a month ago, one of the young bears of the Lodge colony was disporting in the top of a tree in the pit, when it fell and was killed. Several days later another fell from the top of a monkey cage and died soon afterward.

With all these misfortunes, the Lodges have lost comparatively few cubs. They have sold many to "zoos," and have treated their friends in Akron and elsewhere to succulent bear meat. Handsome offers are being made constantly to Mr. Lodge for specimens, and this year he can sell any one of the cubs for \$800 almost at any time.