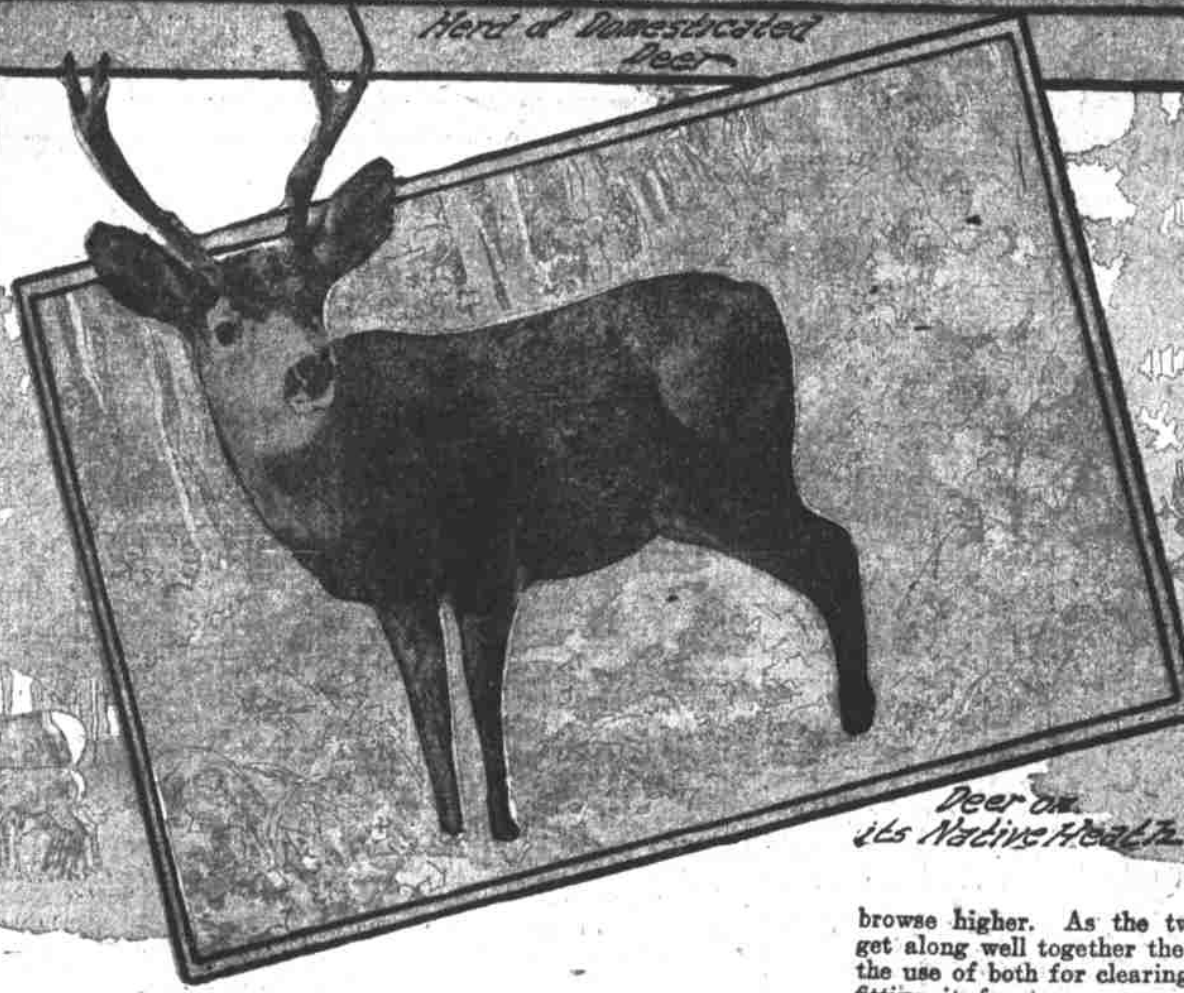
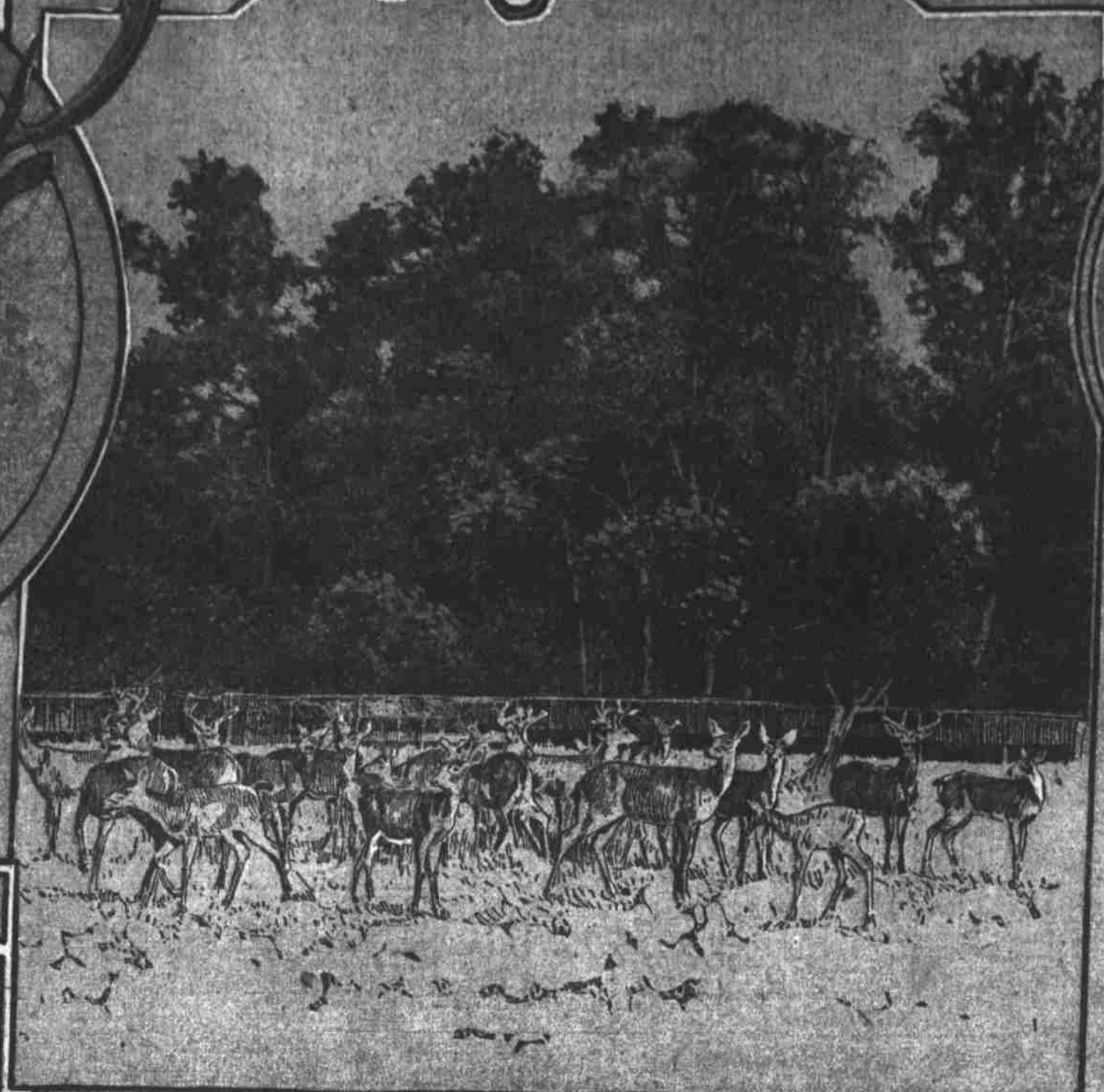


"Raise Deer for Market" Says Uncle Sam.



Industry That the Government is Trying to Boom

FOR some time past Uncle Sam, through his agents in the Department of Agriculture, has been endeavoring to interest his people in efforts to increase the production of game animals for market purposes.

In a recent bulletin from the department, he called attention to the growing scarcity of game animals in this country and offered suggestions to increase the supply.

"For instance," the bulletin stated, "the supply of venison is wholly inadequate to the demand, and the time seems opportune for developing the industry of deer farming, which may be made profitable, alike to the state and to the individuals engaged therein."

"Deer and elk may be raised to advantage in forests and on rough, brushy ground unfitted for either agriculture or stock raising, thus utilizing for profit much land that is now waste. An added advantage is that the business is well adapted to land owners of small means."

It is the effort of the Department of Agriculture to show that the raising of venison for market is as legitimate and practicable a business as producing beef or mutton. If farmers take up deer raising as part of their activities another solution of the food problem would seem at hand.

THERE is every reason why Uncle Sam, the various states and individuals in the states should take prompt steps to prevent the threatened extermination of game animals and birds.

Not only can the progress toward extermination be stopped, but it is believed that by means of intelligent game propagation, both by states and by private enterprise, many of our depleted ranges can be restocked.

Investigations by government authorities lead them to believe that when certain restrictions now imposed by state laws are removed the business of raising deer and elk for sale may be made an important and highly profitable industry.

This, especially, because it will be the means

of using to advantage much land that otherwise would be unproductive.

If venison could be put on the market at something like the price of beef or mutton it is believed it would find favor in many households; it is now known principally as an article of hotel and club dining room menus.

Wherever the flesh of deer has been obtainable in quantity it has been a staple article of diet, and it finds favor wherever used. The flavor of venison is distinctive, suggesting mutton rather than beef. By many it is hailed, in cold weather, with about the delight that an epicure manifests in finding wild duck on his table rather than the domestic fowl.

It is suggested to would-be raisers that an overproduction of venison is improbable. The supply rarely meets the demand now; if popularized and the supply enlarged, it is believed a profitable new field of production will be opened.

COOKED IN MANY WAYS

Venison may be roasted, pan-broiled, boiled or used in stews—in fact, may be treated as beef is. To be found at its best, however, venison, especially venison steak, should be eaten as soon as possible after it is cooked.

Experiments have shown a number of species of the deer family to be susceptible to domestic rearing. Even at that, raising deer for market does not imply that they must be entirely domesticated.

Some deer farmers keep them in large preserves, with surroundings as nearly natural as possible, and do not attempt their domestication. Still, domestication is believed to be better, if the raiser is going into the business for money.

When a farmer begins the business of deer-raising he must be careful as to the source of his stock. He should not, as a general proposition, transplant animals from arid to humid sections of the country, or vice versa. Many would-be pioneers in the business have ignored this precaution and have seen their plans result in failure.

While the term "deer" is used here in its general sense, it includes both the ordinary deer and the elk, these two species of wild game being best subjects for domestication among their kinds.

Both a browsing and a grazing animal is the elk. It eats grass freely; it has been known to subsist entirely upon the pasturage of cattle, but it prefers a mixture of browse and grass.

Its flesh, although somewhat coarse, is said to be superior in flavor to most venison. It should not be eaten soon after slaughter, but should be left hanging for four or five days before being used.

"With few exceptions," states a recent publication of the Department of Agriculture, "early attempts to domesticate elk were made by men wealthy enough to disregard all thought of profit in raising them. Soon the serious problem of controlling them outweighed the novelty of their possession, and one by one the attempts at domestication were abandoned."

"A desire to preserve this important game animal has caused a renewal of attempts to breed it in confinement, and at present there are small herds under private ownership in many places in the United States."

"Of about a dozen successful breeders nearly all are of opinion that raising elk for market can be made remunerative if present laws as to the sale of the meat are modified."

One characteristic of the elk family commends it to raisers. It is that the elk adapts itself readily to almost any environment. "Even within the narrow confines of the paddocks of the ordinary zoological park the animal does well and increases, so that periodically the herds have to be reduced by sales."

A farmer at Lasaka Springs, Ark., has a herd of thirty-four elk. "They have range in the Ozarks on rough land covered with hardwood forest and abundant undergrowth. The animals improve the forest by clearing out part of the thicket. They feed on buds and leaves to a height of eight feet."

"In clearing out underbrush from thickets they are more useful than goats, since they

browse higher. As the two kinds of animals get along well together the farmer recommends the use of both for clearing up brushy land and fitting it for tame grasses.

"The increase of elk under domestication is equal to that of cattle. Fully 90 per cent. of the females produce healthy young. An adult male elk weighs from 700 to 1000 pounds; a female from 600 to 800 pounds."

"The percentage of dressed meat is greater than with cattle, but, owing to hostile game laws, experience in marketing it is very limited. An offer of 40 cents a pound for dressed meat was received from St. Louis, but the law would not permit its export." The Arkansas farmer says:

From the fact that as high as \$1.50 per pound has been paid for this meat in New York city and Canada, and that the best hotels and restaurants pronounce it the finest of all the meats of mammals, we are of the opinion that if laws were such that domesticated elk meat could be furnished it would be many years before the supply would make the price reasonable compared with other meats. Elk meat can be produced in many sections of this country at less cost per pound than beef, mutton or pork.

The Virginia, or whitetail, deer is the common deer of the United States, and its adaptability to nearly all sections of the country is acknowledged. The general experience of breeders, according to experts of the Agricultural Department, is that "with suitable range, plenty of good water and reasonable care in winter raising this deer for stocking preserves or for venison may be made as profitable as any other livestock industry."

A BEAUTIFUL ANIMAL

Closely resembling the European fallow deer in nature, and of about the same size, the Virginia deer is a beautiful animal. Its color is brown in summer and grayish brown in winter; the fawns are spotted with white. The body of the animal is from five to five and a half feet long, and it is three to three and a half feet high, weighing from 120 to 200 pounds.

By nature the deer is very timid; it flies from man with great speed, darting through the thickness of the forest almost as rapidly as in the open.

Running wild, its food varies with the season; in winter consisting of buds of various shrubs, and in spring and summer the tender

grasses and berries. At times the deer makes itself unpopular with a farmer by raiding young wheat, oats, pea patches and cornfields.

Discussing the possibility of domesticating these animals and raising them for market, Department of Agriculture experts have this to say:

"Not only do deer thrive on land unsuited for cattle or horses, but, like elk, they may be raised to great advantage in brushy or timbered pastures fully stocked with cattle or horses, as the food of deer rarely includes grasses."

"Advocates of the Angora goat industry state that within the United States there are 250,000,000 acres of land not suited to tillage or to the pasture of horses, cattle or sheep which are well adapted to goats. Much of this land is suited also to deer and elk, and can be utilized for these animals with less injury to forest cover than would result from its browsing by goats."

"The propagation of the Virginia deer has seldom been undertaken in a systematic way. The animals have often been bred in parks for pleasure or in large preserves for sport, but the economic possibilities in raising them have received little attention. Recently breeders have recognized the fact that they are profitable under proper management and would be much more so were conditions for marketing live animals and venison more favorable."

CAN FIND PLENTY OF FOOD

"While deer are chiefly browsing animals, in captivity they eat nearly every kind of vegetation, including most kinds of garden stuff. They are fond of acorns, beechnuts, chestnuts and other mast. Lily pads, leaves, lichens and mosses are freely eaten."

"With plenty of range and an abundant variety of plants there need be, therefore, no apprehension concerning the deer's food. A good supply of running water must be provided and the animals should have access to rock salt. If the browse and pasturage are scant, a small ration of grain should be fed."

"Of the grains, corn is generally recommended as food; there is no waste, as the deer pick up every grain. Coarse hay full of weeds is preferable to timothy or other tame hays, except alfalfa. Of clover hay, deer usually eat the blossom heads greedily, but waste the other parts. In winter feeding is necessary everywhere, and in the northern half of the United States shelter of some kind should be provided."

One of the best-known deer and elk preserves in the eastern part of the United States is that of former Congressman Alexander Billmeyer, in Montour county, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Billmeyer keeps deer and elk because he loves the animals. His fondness for the creatures of forest and water is a natural result of the experience and training of his boyhood days.

Both as boy and young man he wandered through the woods with gun and rod and had quite a reputation as a sportsman. As he has grown older and accumulated wealth, he has turned from slaying game to preserving it, and he enjoys the new pleasure possibly more than he did the old.

A MODEL GAME PRESERVE

The Billmeyer farm, near Washingtonville, Montour county, Pa., is pointed out to travelers passing that way. Its fields are laid out in squares, and the devastation of drought is provided against by a complete system of irrigating ditches.

In his game preserve are a score or so of elk, nearly fourscore deer, thousands of gray squirrels and a number of wild turkeys.

Hundreds of visitors from all parts of the country have inspected Mr. Billmeyer's deer and elk herds and have learned much of his system of keeping those animals. Jumbo, the elk king of the place, has the proud distinction of having been exhibited in Philadelphia during a national convention of his human friends, the Elks, and, in consequence, his name and fame are known throughout the land.

Among the curiosities of the elk herd on this place is a young bull elk that has been trained to trot in harness. The animal takes kindly to road work of this kind, and has developed speed enough to outstrip many of the fast horses in the neighborhood.

Many of these animals have become as tame and tractable as calves and give no trouble. They make friends with the children, who visit them almost daily, and poke their slender noses through the paling fence to eat from the hands of their admiring little friends.

Mr. Billmeyer's herds do not depend alone upon pasture and browsing for their subsistence. Their owner sees to it that they never go hungry. An evidence of the care given them is the fact that the owner feeds to them annually something like 2000 bushels of grain and 300 bushels of nuts of various kinds.