

# MUSK OX SEARCH SUCCESSFUL



**MUSK OX CALVES**—Four-month-old musk ox calves are lined up facing their captors, a timeless instinct of self-protection of their kind. Only hours away from their wild existence on Ellesmere Island in deep Canadian Arctic, the young animals are in a tool shed-barn on Eureka weather base on the island. Within two or three days, most of the calves would come up volun-

tarily to feed when they saw the feeding can with rubber nipple. The young musk oxen are now at Old Fort Chimo near Ungava Bay in Canada. They will be a nucleus of a breeding stock there. More photographs of the expedition will be published next week.

—Photograph by LANSING HOLDEN

## Expedition Reaches 80 Degrees North To Capture Calves

By HOWARD ROCK  
Times Editor

A unique expedition deep into the Canadian Arctic was completed early this month by the Institute of Northern Agricultural Research of Vermont.

The expedition led by Prof. John Teal, Jr., now stationed at the Institute's University of Alaska Musk Ox Project at College, penetrated into

Ellesmere Island to Sidre Fjord 80 degrees north into the Arctic.

There, a capture of 15 musk ox calves was conducted by Teal with the use of helicopters to establish a breeding stock for a new breeding station at Old Fort Chimo near Ungava Bay in Canada.

The expedition was in response to petitions by Eskimo village councils in Canada and in collaboration with the Province of Quebec. The Eskimos there wish to establish herds with ideas to improve their economy by utilization of the QIVI UT, a fine Cashmere type wool musk oxen shed in spring.

Knowing that musk ox requires very little food to exist, John Teal was amazed of what he and other expedition members found on Ellesmere Island.

"There are a couple of thousand musk oxen living on the Fosheim Peninsula in which Sidre Fjord is located. The vegetation is so sparse that one gets the impression they must be eating mud!" said Teal.

"The surface of the land is covered with mud polygens and frost-cracked rock. Here and there, an occasional blade of grass sticks up a few inches, and more rarely a small willow lies flat on the ground.

"Yet the land incredibly supports not only this large population of musk oxen, but also polar caribou, thousands of Arctic hares, lemmings, and the whole chain of predators, wolves, foxes,

(Continued on page 6)



# Musk Ox Calves...

(Continued from Page 1)

owls, etc.

"By comparison, the knee-deep grass of Nunivak island could support tens of thousands of musk oxen."

The expedition arrived at Slide Fjord on August 20. The men went north via Resolute Bay.

"Five of the party of nine men flew to Slide Fjord by a twin Otter aircraft. Four went north on the Canadian icebreaker MacDonald arriving on August 25," said Teal.

Discovered by Norwegian explorer, Otto Sverdrup, Slide Fjord country is a mountainous region choked with drift ice and occasional iceberg.

There, the capture of 15 calves took place with the use of a helicopter to separate calves from adult musk oxen. When this was done, the men run them down and tackle the calves that weighed about 180 pounds.

Some of the time, Teal said, calves could not be separated from their adults and had to be driven on foot into gullies or other suitable ground formation and roped.

"We hoped we did not slide into the adults that would have quickly killed us," said John Teal.

Twenty-eight calves were captured to get the correct ratio of 12 females and three males. The rejected male calves were freed and painted white on their rumps so they would not be recaptured.

Teal said those released "were so angry that they would take on anything in sight, charging both men and helicopters."

One helicopter was lost for two days on the northwest coast of Axel Heiberg Island on the way north to join the expedition. It was found after a two-day search by a Super Cub.

It had crashed on August 25 after hitting its tail rotor on shale. The occupants had to walk back to the expedition's headquarters for 22 miles in dense fog that had rolled in from the ice of Greely Fjord.

After that, helicopters from the icebreaker Labrador

were used to get to the herds and to bring captured calves back to camp.

As the last calf was captured on August 29, winter began in the deep Arctic. Snow fell and foul weather descended over the whole of the northern Canadian Arctic islands.

All the captured calves were flown south to Fort Chimo by DC-4 in a ten-hour flight arriving on September 3.

On arrival, crates were hurriedly placed upon Eskimo Peterhead boats and taken five miles downriver to the station at Old Fort Chimo, racing a 38-foot tide on the way.

They were then released into a large pen and soon felt at home and came forward to drink milk from nipple cans. Up to the time they were released into the pen, the calves had never seen real grass or bushes.

The arrival of the calves at Old Fort Chimo created a lot of interest. Eskimo people in outboards visited the station at all hours. Some of them had to stay overnight after being caught by high tides.

They came to see the animals and discuss their value and economic possibilities based upon the Cashmere-type underwool, or qiviut, and the products spun, knitted, or woven from it.

As in Alaska, the Old Fort Chimo project will be the introduction of a type of social change and not merely biological research.

"Success depends primarily upon the decisions which will be made by the Eskimo people themselves," said John Teal. "The Institute will be acting mainly as consultant, supplier of animals, trainer of herdsmen, and supplier of markets for musk ox products."

Men in the expedition in addition to John Teal were: Peter Strong, Greenwich, Connecticut; Lansing Holden, Manhasset, New York; Burgess Smith, Farmington, Connecticut; Duke Watson, Seattle, Washington;

James Buckley, Sharon, Connecticut; Robert Madden, Washington, D. C.; Lars Aby, Stockholm, Sweden; and Roger Le Jeune, St. Foy, Quebec.

Robert Madden joined the expedition to photograph the operation for the National Geographic.

Lars Aby, winner of the Stockholm Art Award for 1966, took movies for his country.