

Don't Get Too Chummy with Animal Young

Ronald J. Somerville, Acting Southcentral Regional Supervisor for the Department of Fish and Game, reported that Alaska's wildlife are about to engage in the demanding chores of rearing their young.

Somerville said newly born moose calves have been observed and the number will be increasing in the next few weeks. The peak of moose calving occurs during the first week of June, he said, with the majority of the calves being born by June 10.

The game official pointed out that most of Alaska's annual wildlife families have been started by the first week of June.

An excellent area to observe moose with calves is on the tidal flats along the new highway to Palmer, he said. At Sheep Mountain ewes with lambs can be seen with binoculars from the highway.

"While fishing or hiking during the coming weeks," he said, "the alert observer can study the absorbing and oft-times humorous antics of these wildlife babies with binoculars and cameras."

He cautioned anyone pursuing this pastime to use extreme care.

"This bit of advice would save a lot of headaches, if followed," he said.

Expressing concern for the safety of anyone who gets too close or who handles the young animals, he added, "I would rather face a polar bear on the icecap than a cow moose that has been separated from her long-eared, wobbly-legged calf."

"Some well-meaning people have picked up young creature of the wild when it appears they are unattended or lost," he said. "All too often these same people call for help later as the youngsters fail to respond to 'kind' treatment."

In nearly every case these youngsters are not lost or in need of human help, he said,

and in every case would be better left where they are found. He further reminded that a permit must be obtained before keeping any live wild game.

Our wild animals are here for everyone to see and enjoy, Somerville said. "But don't handle the merchandise."