

TWO RESEARCH SCIENTISTS KILL FIVE POLAR BEARS

Five polar bears have been accidentally killed in a scientific project near Pt. Barrow, according to James Brooks, director of the Alaska Division of Game.

The bears were killed about three weeks ago when two scientists gave the huge animals an overdose of succinylcholine chloride, a drug used to make the polars immobile so that they could be tagged.

The scientists involved are Dr. Vagn Flyger and Dr. Martin Schein, of the University of Maryland, while on a project sponsored by the Arctic Institute of North America. The scientists shot six bears with the drug from a heli-

immobilized and tagged by the scientists successfully was killed a short time later by a hunter. Reportedly the skin was spoiled by the red dye, Nyanzol A, which was used to mark the animal.

Asked for his general reaction, Brooks said, "It is unfortunate that they knew so little about the process and that these bears were sacrificed."

He pointed out that the Division of Game has successfully used succinylcholine chloride in immobilizing Kodiak bears and had personnel who were experienced in using the drug.

The scientists were sort of

copter.

According to Brooks, the pair were given a permit by the State Department of Game to live capture, tag, and release polar bears.

"They came with the best of credentials," Brooks said. But when he heard rumors that a number of polar bear had been killed in the tagging process that he checked with Dr. Max Brewer at the Arctic Research Laboratory at Barrow and that subsequently he had revoked the two scientists' permit.

A sixth polar bear that was

aloof," he said and had not asked for the department's assistance.

Brooks said that in the future his department would not issue a permit to Dr. Flyger and Dr. Schein and they would not get cooperation from the State Division of Game unless they changed their approach.

One of the bears was hit with a dart from the helicopter and apparently the

(Continued on Page 8)

Five Polar Bears. . .

(Continued from Page 1)

drug became buried in the animal's fat and was not effective. He was hit the second time and when the first dart was removed, the second became effective killing the bear.

In a second case, the bear became immobile with the first injection but during the tagging process began to stir at which time a second-smaller injection was administered. The second injection resulted in the bear's death.

The other three cases were simply initial overdoses, according to Brooks.

"I feel giving second doses of the drug is a blunder that the two should not have made," Brooks continued.

"It is fairly well known that a second shot causes a shock reaction that is often fatal and apparently this they didn't know."

Brooks said that there had been reports that there had been many other bears killed by the scientific party, but Brooks discounted these reports saying that he felt he had reliable information from Dr. Brewer and the helicopter pilot.

Asked to comment on a plan of the Arctic Institute of North America to install radio transmitters on polar bears and track them by scientific satellite, Brooks said that such a plan would be extremely expensive and require a great deal of scientific technology.

"We have none in the state employe at the present time who would technically qualify

to undertake such a thing and I'm not too hot about it for that reason.

Brooks said that in the permit issued to the scientists there was a provision requiring if any bears were inadvertently killed that they became the property of the state.

"These men did salvage the skins, reproductive organs and various other biological specimens and turned them over to a representative of the department," he said.

The scientists were in Alaska about three weeks. Dr. Flyger left about 10 days ago; Dr. Schein left last week.