

Improved Ways Of Slaughtering Fur Seal Posed

The U. S. Department of the Interior and the Humane Society of the United States jointly announced formation of a five-man task force to seek improved methods of conducting the annual fur seal harvest on the Pribilof Islands, Alaska.

Clarence F. Pautzke, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, said the group will be headed by Fork Wilke, director of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries marine mammal biological laboratory, Seattle, Wash.

Wilke has served on the Scientific Committee of the International Fur Seal Commission since its formation in 1967 and has been a U. S. representative at all of the Commission's meetings.

Other members of the Commission are Canada, Japan, and the Soviet Union. The United States and the Soviet Union share their seal resources with the other two members.

Soviet rookeries are located on Robin Island and the Commander Islands in the southwest Bering Sea.

Mr. Pautzke said that Mel L. Morse, President of the Humane Society, has agreed to serve on the task force which is scheduled to visit the Pribilofs in July during the next fur seal harvest.

Another member of the group will be Donald S. Balser, research biologist at the Denver Wildlife Research Center of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

Scientists from the U. S. Department of Agriculture have attended preliminary meetings, and a representative will be invited to join the task force.

The final member will be a scientist nominated by the National Academy of Sciences, Mr. Pautzke said, and these two members will be named in a few days.

Fur seals currently are dispatched quickly by a blow on the head, a method approved as humane by the Federal Government.

The Society has asked the

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Bureau to seek other means of ending the animals' lives.

At least five different methods have been discussed in preliminary meetings and several will be tried during the annual harvest this year. The task force's goal is to recommend a method that will satisfy the humanitarian requirements for dispatching the animals within the physical conditions existing on the Pribilof Islands.