

C.S.

SCIENTIFIC.

1926.

No.

235/26

H.E. the Governor.

SUBJECT.

1926

FUR SEAL.

6th May. 1926

Notes regarding preparing of skins,
prepared by Mr. J. E. Hamilton.

Previous Paper.

MINUTES.

Minute from H. E. The Governor of 6th May. 1926.

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Subsequent Paper.

TREATMENT of SKINS

The skin should be removed with the blubber attached by a slit from tail to chin, another on the short hair round the fore flippers and another round the nose behind the whiskers.

The result is an oval skin with two holes where the front flippers were.

Flensing should not aim at the removal of all blubber, a layer 1/4" thick should so far as possible be left all over it.

Salting. Spread a thick layer of salt on the floor, on this a skin, flesh up, then another layer of salt, and so alternately until the pile has reached a convenient height. The salt should be applied with a lavish hand: it is not possible to use too much.

The pile of skins will throw out a good deal of liquid which will run down to the floor. Arrangements for drainage should be made, for instance the pile might well be made on a false floor with some 1/2" holes bored in it, but in that case some fabric- e.g. muslin- should be laid over the holes to prevent loss of salt.

The skins should be looked over, and fresh salt put on, on the first, second and fourth days, or until such time as all excess of moisture has drained off and the salt appears dry and the skins perfectly salted. They may then be packed in barrels for transport.

When looking over and resalting the skins the whole pile should be taken down and rebuilt with the fresh salt. It will probably be found in practice that it will not be necessary to use entirely fresh salt each time, but the wettest part should be discarded.

This salt may be replaced in the original sacks and hung up to drain, when it will again be fit to use. If it is very dirty and bloody it may be washed in sea water before being hung up. The washing will naturally entail a certain amount of loss of salt, but less than if the whole were discarded.

Packing. A layer of salt, say 2", should be put in the bottom of the barrel, then each skin should be covered with salt on the flesh side, the flanks folded fur out, and then rolled up tightly, placed in the barrel with a layer of salt between each layer of skins, finishing up with a covering of salt on top. Each barrel is to be tightly filled. Skins should AT ALL TIMES be kept in a cool place.

Staginess.

Staginess is the condition which arises before and during the time when the seal loses its coat of hair, an event which occurs annually, about March in the Falkland Islands.

It may be identified by turning back the hair and fur, when it will be found, according to the degree of growth, that the new hair is visible as shorter or longer black fibres in the base of the coat. In the more advanced stage the new hairs are long, and although pale at the roots are very conspicuous, while the old hair is becoming loose and can be pulled out easily.

In the beginning of March the Falkland Islands seal are shedding the hair freely, so that "staginess" must begin a good deal earlier, possibly in the beginning of February, but practical experiment only could decide this point.

EXTRACT from Letter from George Rice Ltd., 65, Queen Street.

March 17th 1925

Mr. J. E. Hamilton,
Room 85,
Colonial Office,
Downing Street, S.W.1.

Dear Sir,

Your draft of directions re Seal Skins appears to us to clearly describe the method that should in our opinion be adopted, and we think if these instructions are carefully carried out, the skins should arrive in London in first class condition.

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Regarding a stagey skin, we shall be pleased to send you one, either the particular skin you saw, or if possible one that more clearly shews the stage hair, we should not make any charge as it is of very little value.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) SIDNEY RICE.

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Fur Seal Skins.

With reference to directions as to the salting and packing of sealskins, I drafted the directions and then sent them to Mr. Rice who suggested an alteration which has accordingly been inserted. I also enclose his comments on the draft. He told me that the Cape Government skins were distinctly the best preserved so I went to the office of the High Commissioner for the Union. They were not able to give me any detailed information, as I feared would be the case since the business is a purely local matter. However, if 'DISCOVERY' goes to Capetown there should be a chance of acquiring information.

With reference to staginess, Mr. Rice showed me a South American skin which was in this condition, I therefore proposed to buy it as an example, and when he offered to present it I consulted Mr. Friston here, who has taken Mr. Allen's place. Mr. Friston said that there was no objection to accepting it, on the de minimis principle. The skin is unsaleable and may be worth three or four shillings at the most.

From His Excellency the Governor



to The Honourable the Colonial Secretary.

Then mts on preparation of skins of full seal,
which can make for me by Mr J. S. Hamilton,
may be found useful when time comes to
take seals + make their skins.

SR

6 May 1926