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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, September 30, 1941

QUESTION BOX

- Is dry dog food a complete food?
- How prevent running fits in dogs?
- More or less big game in National forests?

Answers from

Scientists at State
agriculture experiment
stations and foresters
of the U.S. Department
of Agriculture

--ooOoo--

Several letters in the mailbag this week ask about diet and health of animals. Answers to these questions today come from scientists at various State agricultural experiment stations who have been studying these problems.

To begin with here are a couple of questions about dogs. The first letter inquires about the dry dog food now for sale in a number of stores. A dog-owner wants to know: "Will my dog stay healthy on dry dog food alone, or does he need meat, or milk, or canned dog food to go with the dry?"

Nutrition scientists at the Wisconsin Experiment Station report that the dry dog food they tested was not usually a complete food. They found that the high heat of baking used to dry and preserve the food injured the protein in it. They found that dry food in pellet-form was better than other forms, but even so, the vitamin A was likely to be injured and often the protein, too. These scientists say: "Although it is risky to keep dogs entirely on the dry foods obtainable at present, it is possible that research may find a way to make these foods complete in every respect. Not many years ago, canned dog food was as undependable as dry food is now, but experiments showed how canned food

could be improved with the result that all reliable manufacturers now put out excellent canned products."

So much for the question about dry dog food. Now for a letter asking the cause of running fits in dogs. The letter says: "Our dog had some sort of a nervous fit recently--running around, shaking and barking. I was told that this was a common disease of dogs known as running fits, fright disease, or canine hysteria and that possibly the dog's diet was too low in vitamin B-one. Will you tell me whether B-one cures running fits?"

The answer to this question also comes from the Wisconsin Experiment Station where scientists report that preventing running fits is a matter of using enough good quality animal protein in the dog's ration rather than simply vitamin B-one. This means feeding dogs home-prepared rations containing raw or rare meat, or feeding commercial dog foods that have not been baked at too high heat.

When the Wisconsin scientists fed a group of dogs meat scraps and wheat which had been baked at high heat, the dogs developed running fits in from 8 to 18 days. But dogs did not develop these fits if they had enough milk along with the food cooked at high heat, or had some raw or rare meat, or some good canned dog food.

So much for questions about dogs. Now for an inquiry about big game animals in our National Forests. One letter here asks whether the forests have more big game animals or less than they had 25 years ago.

The answer to this question comes from foresters of the U. S. Department of Agriculture who take a "census" of animals in the forests during the winter. They say that big game animals have nearly doubled in number every 10 years since 1906, and that they now number more than 2 million head. This means an

average of 6 big game animals per square mile of National Forests. Besides these large animals there are the smaller ones--3 million rabbits and hares, 2 million squirrels and so on. The foresters estimate that there are 5 and a half million game birds, and about 396 thousand meat-eating animals. You may be interested to know that among the smaller animals roaming the forests these days are some 32 thousand house cats that have gone wild.

Nearly 86 percent--or a million 800 thousand of the big game animals in the National forests are deer--with elk coming next and numbering 154 thousand; black bear 63 thousand; antelope 20 thousand; mountain goat 19 thousand; bighorn over 9 thousand; moose over 7 thousand; peccary about the same; grizzly and Alaska brown bear around 42 hundred; and 790 wild boar. The wild boar is an immigrant, now prospering in this new country. Some years ago sportsmen imported a few wild boar to this country from Europe. Now 3 national forests in the Appalachian Mountains of the Southeast have wild boar. So has the Los Padres National Forest in California.

The game that has increased the most in number during the last year are 3 kinds of deer--the mule deer; white-tailed deer; and Columbia black-tailed deer. Other animals that have gone up in population are; the black bear, mountain goat, antelope, bighorn and moose. In the last 20 years the only big game animal which has gone down in numbers is the bighorn, but as last winter's count shows, even that animal increased in number during the last year.

That's all the questions for today. More on Thursday.

