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Sports

"Moe" Cartman — Sports Editor

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Wildlife biologist explains trip to Russia

Speaks at Lavenham gathering of Assiniboine group

A trip to Russia to attend a wildlife conference was an eye-opening experience for Vince Crichton, Ph.D., who is employed by the Manitoba government natural resources department as a provincial moose, elk and caribou biologist.

Crichton attended the Assiniboine Wildlife Association dinner and awards presentation in Lavenham during the weekend. He gave a slide presentation and spoke on his experiences while there.

"I went there originally for the government and then spent some of my own time travelling through various parts of the country," he said.

He entered the country in the far east and travelled across the north territory going out by way of Finland. "I actually went right across the country and saw all the different wildlife management plans they have there," he said.

Crichton stated Manitoba and Canada are far ahead of the Russians when it came to animal

diseases and control as well as planning.

"We're ahead of them in every department," he said. "There's no comparison."

He explained there was a different attitude toward life in general there and mentioned how fortunate Canadians were to live in such an affluent society.

"There were places that were over-hunted but the people needed the animals for food. I was at a logging camp where they served moose meat all summer."

Crichton wanted to see how the Russians lived in the wildlife areas and was disappointed with the lack of progress they have made as far as disease control and hunting is concerned.

"They have the same problems of poaching and illegal hunting as we do," he said. "In fact, in some cases the government officials were the worst offenders. They'd go up in helicopters and shoot the animals."

He did see one project that fascinated him and that involved the use of moose.

At one location the animals are close to being domesticated and are milked on a regular basis.

"The milk is reported to be extra good for respiratory ailments, digestive failures and other troubles and the hospitals there can never get enough," he said.

Explaining the moose kept for milking are all females and younger stock, he said the bulls are sent out in the wild to fend for themselves.

Every night the females are sent outside their corrals to look for food and in the morning a bell gets them back into the enclosure.

When it becomes breeding time the moose have little trouble finding a mate outside the enclosure.

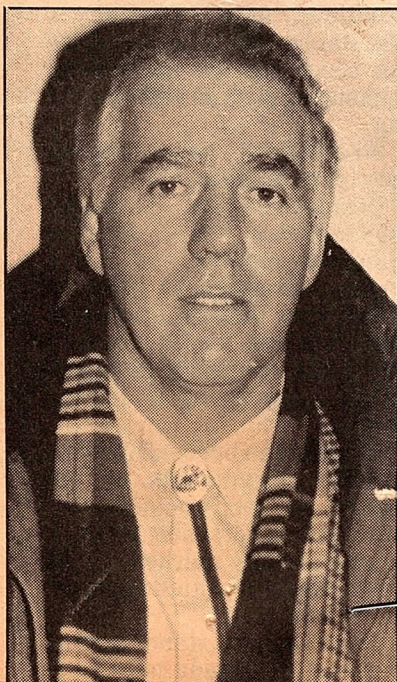
"The milk is so popular there they just can't produce enough and they are now in about the eighth generation of animals," he said.

During his visit to Russia, Dr. Crichton was consulted on different ways the Russians could increase their tourist industry, help with ski lodges, hunting and other such things the Manitoba specialist has expertise with.

In an interview Mr. Crichton explained the moose and elk populations in Manitoba are consistent. "It just depends where you go. There are some locations that do much better than others."

Crichton is in the midst of trying to get a new group organized and recognized in the province. Just for Wildlife has been started by eight people interested in the province's future. It is not connected with the government and is a non-profit organization.

Crichton asked for help and inquiries may be addressed to him at 1495 St. James Street in Winnipeg or by phoning 945-6815.



VINCE CRICHTON