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ALASKA

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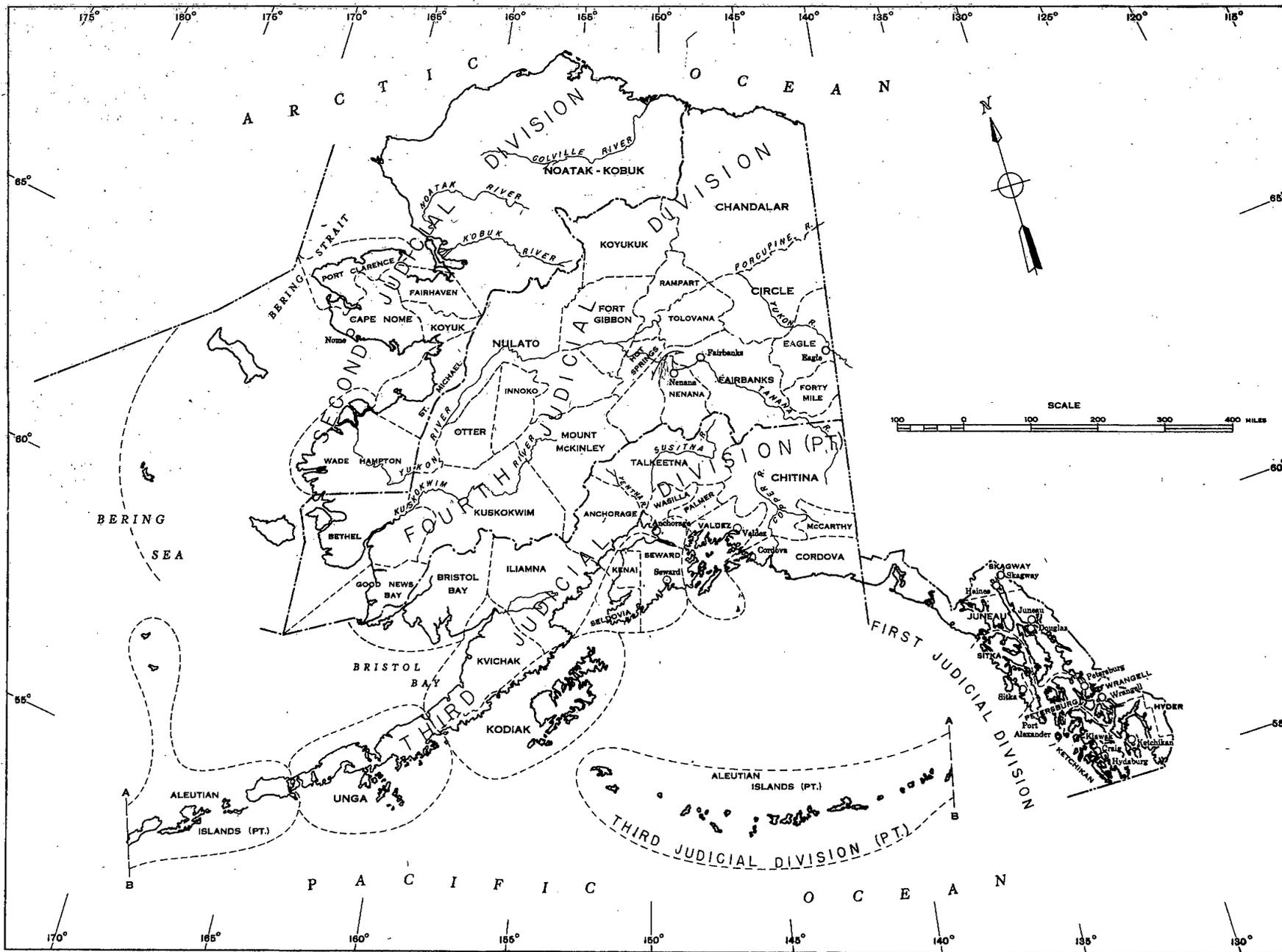
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# ALASKA

## JUDICIAL DIVISIONS AND RECORDING DISTRICTS



# CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE: 1940

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

**Introduction.**—This report presents, for Alaska, statistics on agriculture which were collected in 1939 as a part of the Sixteenth Decennial Census of the United States. Presentation is also made of comparative data on agriculture as collected by the Fifteenth, Fourteenth, Thirteenth, and Twelfth Decennial Censuses. The first attempt by the Federal Government of the United States to survey agricultural resources and agricultural production in Alaska was made as of June 1, 1900 (Twelfth Decennial Census), although the first enumeration of its population by the United States was made in 1880 and a second in 1890.

Information is usually given for the judicial divisions, when available, as well as for the Territory as a whole. To limit repetition of data, sometimes the division type of table carries more information than does a table presenting data for the Territory only. In a few cases, the reverse situation is true. For that reason, both types of tables should be consulted to secure all the available information. To insure this, the text often mentions all the tables in which figures are presented for a given subject.

**Legal basis for the 1939 Census.**—Provision for the 1939 Census of Alaska was made in the Act providing for the Fifteenth Decennial Census of the United States which was approved on June 18, 1929. In part, this Act provided:

That a census of population, agriculture, irrigation, drainage, distribution, unemployment, and mines shall be taken by the Director of the Census in the year 1930 and every ten years thereafter. The census herein provided for shall include each State, the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto Rico. A census of Guam, Samoa, and the Virgin Islands shall be taken in the same year by the respective governors of said islands and a census of the Panama Canal Zone by the Governor of the Canal Zone, all in accordance with plans prescribed or approved by the Director of the Census.

Authority for the change for commencing the enumeration in Alaska at a date prior to April 1, of a decennial year, as followed in the Continental United States, is contained in Section 6 of this Act of Congress, which states:

That the census of the population and of agriculture required by . . . this Act shall be taken as of the 1st day of April, . . . unless the Director of the Census in his discretion shall change the date of commencement of the enumeration . . . by reason of climatic or other conditions which would materially interfere with the proper conduct of the work; . . .

**Brief history, geography, and climate.**—Alaska was purchased from Russia in March 1867, and on October 18 of that year the United States took formal possession at Sitka. Alaska was made a Territory by the Act of August 24, 1912.

The gross area of land and water for Alaska is 586,400 square miles, or nearly one-fifth that of Continental United States. The land surface is 571,065 square miles, or 365,481,600 acres. These area figures were established in 1923 by a committee appointed by the Board of Surveys and Maps to consider and report on the question of having some uniformity in Government publications of areas of various political units of the country. This committee consisted of representatives from the Geological Survey, Coast and Geodetic Survey, the General Land Office, and the Bureau of the Census.

The main topographic features of Alaska are similar to those of the Western United States. The highlands of Alaska, like those of the United States and Canada, are in general parallel to the coast line, and the four topographic provinces of the United States are fairly well defined throughout Western Canada and continue into Alaska.

The Territory has a highly diversified climate, as to both temperature and precipitation. This results partly from its strong relief and partly because of its wide range in latitude. The heavy precipitation in the southern coastal area, which is warmed by the Japan Current, is accompanied by a relatively

mild and equable climate, while farther north and in the inland regions, the precipitation is much less, and the temperature in winter is much lower. Agriculture, in addition to being dependent on temperature and precipitation, is dependent upon the length of the growing season which ranges from about 160 days in the southeast to 80 or 90 days in the central river basins. The shortness of the growing season is offset, to some extent, by the prolonged periods of daylight during the summer season.

The average rainfall in the Matanuska Valley over a period of 16 years has been 16 inches per year. The summers are usually cool with the heaviest rainfall coming during the months of July, August, and September. The days are long in June, July, and August with from 18 to 20 possible hours of sunshine. Generally speaking, snowfalls are not heavy and the weather is not severe in the winter time. Cereal crops, such as spring wheat, oats, and barley, grow and mature well in this valley. Potatoes thrive as do all kinds of root crops. Peas yield well, although there is some difficulty in harvesting them because of high humidity.

In the Tanana Valley, which lies about 240 miles directly north of Matanuska, the frost free period extends ordinarily from about the middle of May to the 10th of September. The winters are cold. The total precipitation varies from 8.5 to 16 inches. The most important farm crops in the Tanana Valley are grain and potatoes, the latter being the chief cash crop. The town of Fairbanks is in the heart of the agricultural region.<sup>1</sup>

**Census dates and periods covered.**—For Alaska, the Census of 1900 was taken as of June 1 and the Censuses of 1910 and 1920 were taken as of January 1. After careful consideration of the unusual climatic conditions, the wide dispersion of the small population over large areas, and the inaccessibility of certain regions, the date of the two most recent censuses was shifted to October 1 in the year preceding the decennial year as followed in the United States. Authority for this change in the date of enumeration has already been referred to. Thus, the Census of Alaska which was made in conjunction with the Fifteenth Decennial Census of the United States was taken as of October 1, 1929; and the Census of Alaska made in conjunction with the Sixteenth Decennial Census of the United States was taken as of October 1, 1939.

For the different censuses of agriculture in Alaska, all questions other than those regarding production, sales, and expenditures related to the census date. In the 1939 census, production and sales of livestock and crops and expenditures were to be reported for the 12-month period ended September 30, 1939, unless the canvass of any farm was deferred until after the close of the year 1939 in which case the data were to relate to the calendar year 1939. For the sake of brevity, the term "census year" was used in many of the questions to designate the period intended to be covered, the definition of "census year" being given in the explanatory part of the schedule and in the enumerator's handbook. In the schedule for 1929, when the census was taken, also, as of October 1, the schedule inquiries on production and expenditures specified that the reports should cover the last 12-month period preceding the census date. The slight change between the two years should have relatively little effect on the comparability of census data for those years. For 1920 and 1910, other than the greater difficulty of making a personal canvass in the winter, very little effect should be had upon the comparability between the data for those two years and the data for the two succeeding censuses. In 1900, the amount of agricultural inventory and production recorded was so small that the date of the census would have had little effect on the absolute amounts.

<sup>1</sup>General information regarding the Territory of Alaska from the Report by The Alaska Planning Council, 1941.

**Scope of the Census of Agriculture.**—The following instruction appeared in the handbook for the census of 1939 entitled, "Instructions to Enumerators:"

In the course of your canvass of population all agricultural operations must be reported, including the keeping of fur animals and other livestock in captivity. Two schedules are used:

The first, the 'General Schedule for Farms and Ranches,' is employed for all operations coming within the scope of the definition 'farm.' This definition, of course, covers town and village dairies, poultry operations, greenhouses, and other specialized agricultural activities.

The second schedule, 'Livestock not on Farms or Ranches,' must be used for all other properties (i.e., properties which fall below the limits set by the definition of 'farm') on which livestock of any kind is kept.

A separate General Schedule for Farms and Ranches was required for every farm. A line schedule form, on each of which the operations of as many as 50 establishments could be listed, was used for recording livestock not on farms or ranches. The information was obtained by census enumerators in a personal canvass of the individual farms and establishments with one exception, viz, the number of reindeer on ranges was supplied by the Reindeer Service, U. S. Department of the Interior.

**Definition of a farm.**—For the guidance of the enumerators and the respondents, this definition of a farm was carried on the general schedule and in the enumerator's handbook:

A farm, for census purposes, is all the land which is directly farmed by one person, either by his own labor alone or with the assistance of members of his household or of hired employees. The land operated by a partnership is likewise considered a farm. A farm may consist of a single tract of land or of a number of separate tracts, and these several tracts may be held under different tenures, as when one tract is owned by the farmer and another tract is rented by him. When a landowner has one or more tenants, renters, croppers, or managers, the land operated by each is treated as a farm. Do not report as a farm any tract of land of less than 3 acres, unless its products during the census year were valued at \$250 or more.

The term "farm," as hereinafter used, is sufficiently elastic to include strictly ranching operations.

**Farm operator.**—Some of the data are presented for the farm operator rather than for the farm itself. A "farm operator," according to the Census definition, is a person who operates a farm, either performing the labor himself or directly supervising it. Thus, for all practical purposes, the number of farm operators is identical with the number of farms.

Farm operators are classified as "white" and "nonwhite." The "nonwhite" group includes Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, Japanese, and any other nonwhite races. Only 25 nonwhite farm operators were reported in the Territory in the most recent enumeration, and data for these are shown in table 14 under subclassifications of native stock and Japanese.

**Tenure.**—Farm operators are also classified according to the tenure under which they operate their farms:

Full owners own all the land they operate.

Part owners own a part and rent from others the rest of the land they operate.

Managers operate farms for others and receive wages or salaries for their services. Persons acting merely as caretakers or hired as laborers are not classified as managers.

Tenants operate hired or rented land only. The schedule for Alaska made no provision for ascertaining the nature of the tenant-landlord relationships; that is, whether a tenant was paying cash, a share of the products, or was operating under some other form of rental payment.

Tenure data are presented in tables 5, 6, 8 to 11, 13 to 15, and 25.

**Principal occupation.**—From the replies to the question, on the General Schedule for Farms and Ranches, as to principal occupation of the farm operator, the farm operators were classified into those engaged in agriculture other than fur farming, those engaged in fur farming, and those engaged in all other occupations. These groups are contrasted with a two-way classification for 1929 in table 7.

**Age of operator.**—Farm operators have been classified separately by age for 1939 only. This age distribution, as well as the average age, is presented in table 8. Additional age data for full owners and part owners, by mortgage status, are given in table 11.

**Year of occupancy.**—The question on the 1939 General Schedule for Farms and Ranches, "Year when operator began to operate this farm..... (Year)," reflects, in part, the stability or instability of operators on a particular farm. No account was taken as to whether the operator was a recent arrival from another area or whether he had ever had previous farm experience. Exact comparison with 1929, the only other year for which term of occupancy data are available, cannot be made, as the question in the former census obtained the years and months the operator had been operating his farm. Figures for the two censuses are given in table 9 and additional data for 1939 are given in table 10. In making the comparisons, recognition must be taken of the influx of new operators made several years ago under government sponsorship. Table 11, relating to mortgage frequency and indebtedness, gives some additional information for term of occupancy for full owners and for part owners.

**Type of farm.**—On the basis of information given on each individual schedule, farms were classified as "fur farms" and "other than fur farms."

Separate figures are given for "fur farms" in tables 11, 14, and 15, and for "other than fur farms" in table 15 only. However, data for the latter group can be obtained by subtracting the figures for "fur farms" from those for all farms in tables 11 and 14. The allocation of census returns to the fur-farm group does not conform to the official listing of licensed fur farmers, for the reason that those enterprises which were engaged primarily in agriculture were assigned to the "other than fur-farms" group, even though they reported some fur animals on hand or some pelts sold.

The number of fur farms given in table 15 exceeds the number of operators with fur farming as their major occupation. This is due to some farms being correctly listed as fur farms even though their operators spent most of their time at other occupations.

Fur animals were reported on each of the two schedules, "General Schedule for Farms and Ranches" and "Livestock not on Farms and Ranches." It appears from the numbers of such animals reported on the second of these schedules, which did not call for data on fur animals sold or on pelts sold, that some of the enterprises were, in fact, fur farms; that is, farms operated primarily for the raising of fur animals.

**Farms reporting.**—The term "farms reporting" as used in the tables indicates the number of farms for which the specified items shown in the particular table were reported. Thus, of the 623 farms recorded in the Territory in 1939, cattle were reported on 256 of these. Hence, the number of farms reporting cattle is given as 256.

**Land in farms.**—The acreage designated as "All land in farms" includes considerable areas of land not actually under cultivation and some land not even used for pasture or grazing, but all such land must have been under the control of the operator and considered a part of his farm. Caution was given that public land used by a rancher without rental was not a part of the rancher's farm. In 1939, the acreages reported for some fur farms were the total areas of islands leased from the Federal Government and, although these areas were sometimes far in excess of the acreages necessary for the maintenance of the numbers of fur animals reported, it was impossible to make any distribution of the figures as between land actually used and land not used. The inclusion of such acreages tended to increase the total land in farms over the acreage reported for earlier years. A farm thus comprised not only the land from which crops were actually harvested, land which was pastured or grazed, cropland from which a crop was not harvested because of failure, and cropland lying idle, but also considerable areas of woodland or wasteland lying within the boundaries of the farm which had been put to little or no agricultural use in the census year.

In 1939, data were secured for 4 classes of land based upon the use made of the land in the census year, as follows:

**Cropland harvested.**—The land from which cultivated crops were harvested; land from which tame or wild hay was cut; and land in small fruits, orchards, vineyards, nurseries, and greenhouses. If any of the land produced more than one crop during the year such acreage was included only once under this question. Planted land on which the crops were intended and used only for grazing was classed as pasture land, but land on which crops originally intended for harvest were hogged or grazed off was treated as cropland harvested.

**Cropland not harvested.**—Cropland from which no crop was harvested in the census year. It may have been lying idle or in fallow or a crop may have been planted which was intended for harvest but was not harvested in any manner because of failure. The term "failure" covers destruction by wind, hail, freeze, drought, floods, insects, disease, or from any other cause, or failure to harvest because of low prices or lack of labor. The acreage designated as crop failure does not represent the entire acreage of crops which failed, but only that acreage of land in crops that failed and which was not successfully replanted to a crop that was harvested in the census year.

**Pasture land.**—Land used only for pasture or grazing in the census year which could have been used for crops, and any other land not suitable for crops used for pasture or grazing, including woodland. (Land from which a crop was harvested in the census year but which was later used for pasture was included under cropland harvested rather than under pasture land.)

**All other land.**—This classification includes all land in farms which was not used for crops, pastured or grazed, or which was not classed as idle or fallow cropland.

The land-use classification for previous censuses differed somewhat from that used in the most recent census. In the presentation of the figures, caution is given, in the form of footnotes, when the data are not strictly comparable.

**Farm values.**—The enumerators were instructed to obtain from each farm operator the total value of the farm (land and buildings) regardless of whether the land was operated by full owner, part owner, manager, or tenant. This total value was to be reported in accordance with the market value; that is, it was to represent the amount which a willing seller would receive from a willing buyer. Considerable trouble was experienced in reporting satisfactorily for values of land under lease from the Federal Government. For institutional farms the values reported were to be those of the farm land and farm buildings only.

The operator was also asked to give the value of all farm buildings on the farm. These values were necessarily the nearest approximation the farm operator could give and, except for the data for government-owned land, the figures obtained are probably somewhat less satisfactory than the figures for the total real-estate value. In any case, the value of buildings should not be subtracted from the total value of the real estate and the difference assumed to represent accurately the market value of the land alone.

Finally, the operator was asked to give the present market value for the farm implements and machinery used in operating the farm. He was to include the value of all farm implements, tools, wagons, carriages, harnesses, dairy equipment, threshers, haying machines, engines, motors, tractors, automobiles, motor-trucks, and all other farm machinery.

All other values reported for 1939 related to fur animals sold alive and to selected livestock products and crops sold; that is, no values are available for inventories of livestock or for total livestock and crop production.

**Farm mortgage debt.**—The farm mortgage inquiries on the 1939 farm schedule were to be answered by operating owners only. Tenants and managers, in many cases, would not know whether the farms which they were operating were mortgaged and if so would be even less likely to know the amount of the debt outstanding. In the case of part owners, the mortgage indebtedness reported represents the encumbrance only on the owned portion of the farm. The acreage owned for such part-owner farms is given separately, but the total value of the farm was not apportioned between the owned and rented parts. All mortgage information is given in table 11.

Mortgage inquiries were also carried on the schedule in 1920. The data for that year are given in the text herewith and are quoted directly from the report for 1920:

"Of the 345 farms operated by their owners in Alaska on January 1, 1920, 11 were reported as mortgaged and 251 as free

from mortgage, while for 83 no report as to mortgage status was received. The amount of the mortgage debt was reported for only 7 of the 11 mortgaged farms. The value of these farms was \$63,300, and the amount of the debt \$7,500, or 11.8 per cent of the value. The average rate of interest paid was 9.3 per cent."

**Farm expenditures.**—Only two major items of farm expenditures were secured for Alaska in the most recent census, viz, amount expended in cash for labor (exclusive of housework) and the amount expended for feed for animals and poultry. Totals, for the census year, for both of these groups were required. The question covering feed included purchases for work dogs and fur animals, as well as feed for other livestock and for poultry. The term "expenditure" included not only cash paid out but any obligations incurred and still unpaid on the census date.

**Livestock and livestock products.**—For convenience, the term "livestock" in the Census Reports is made to include not only domestic animals—such as horses, cattle, hogs, sheep, goats, reindeer, and dogs used as work animals—but also fur-bearing animals kept in captivity and poultry. It follows, then, that the term "Livestock products" should include production from the above classes. It has been mentioned that provision was made for recording on one of the two types of schedules all livestock, whether kept on farms and ranches or in stables, barns, corrals, or other establishments not covered by the definition of a farm. Figures for both of these groups of livestock are presented in tables 16 through 20. Livestock of all ages was to be reported on the schedule for the farm or other establishment where the animals were kept on the date of the census. This applied whether the animals belonged to the operator, to members of his family, to hired help, or to others. In addition, any livestock belonging to a farm but grazing in a national forest or on open range was to be reported on the schedule for the headquarters place.

Horses, mules, asses, and burros were grouped together into one inquiry on the 1939 schedule, following the experience of 1929 when only 8 mules were reported as compared with 311 horses.

The 1939 schedule did not secure, by direct question, the number of cows milked during the census year. The inquiry, "Milk cows (cows kept primarily for milk).....number\_\_\_\_," with its accompanying instruction that milk cows referred to cows that were milked at some time within the census year and were intended to be milked in the future, gives approximately the same total.

The number of reindeer on ranges, as contrasted with the number on farms, when the latter term is used in its narrow sense, was supplied by the Reindeer Service, U. S. Department of the Interior and is presented in table 17.

In reporting fur animals in captivity and pelts from such animals, the enumerator was instructed to include fur animals kept either in pens or on open runs or ranges, such as islands; but not to include wild animals—those that ran free and were not owned by anyone—nor pelts obtained by hunting or by trapping.

Inquiries were carried on the 1939 general schedule for recording sales during the census year of whole milk, cream, all eggs, poultry, live fur-bearing animals, and pelts.

Historical figures for livestock on farms and livestock products, along with figures for livestock not on farms, are presented for the Territory in table 16. This table includes figures for fur animals both on farms and not on farms. Tables 17 and 19 (the latter for fur animals) present, by judicial divisions, more complete current information for livestock on farms, with their production and available sales, while numbers of livestock not on farms for similar areas are given in tables 18 and 20.

**Crops.**—The General Schedule for Farms and Ranches was prepared in such manner that all crops grown on tracts of land listed as farms should have been enumerated. Several "catch-all" questions were used to record crops for which separate inquiries were not carried. The enumerator was instructed to specify the names of the crops for which he listed information under these "catch-all" questions. In presenting the data for crops, a separation has been made, in most cases, of such crops as though a separate question had been provided. Separate inquiries were carried for the quantity and value of sales of hay and potatoes, for the value of vegetables grown for home use, the value of vegetables sold, the value of orchard fruits and small fruits sold, and the value of nursery and greenhouse products sold.