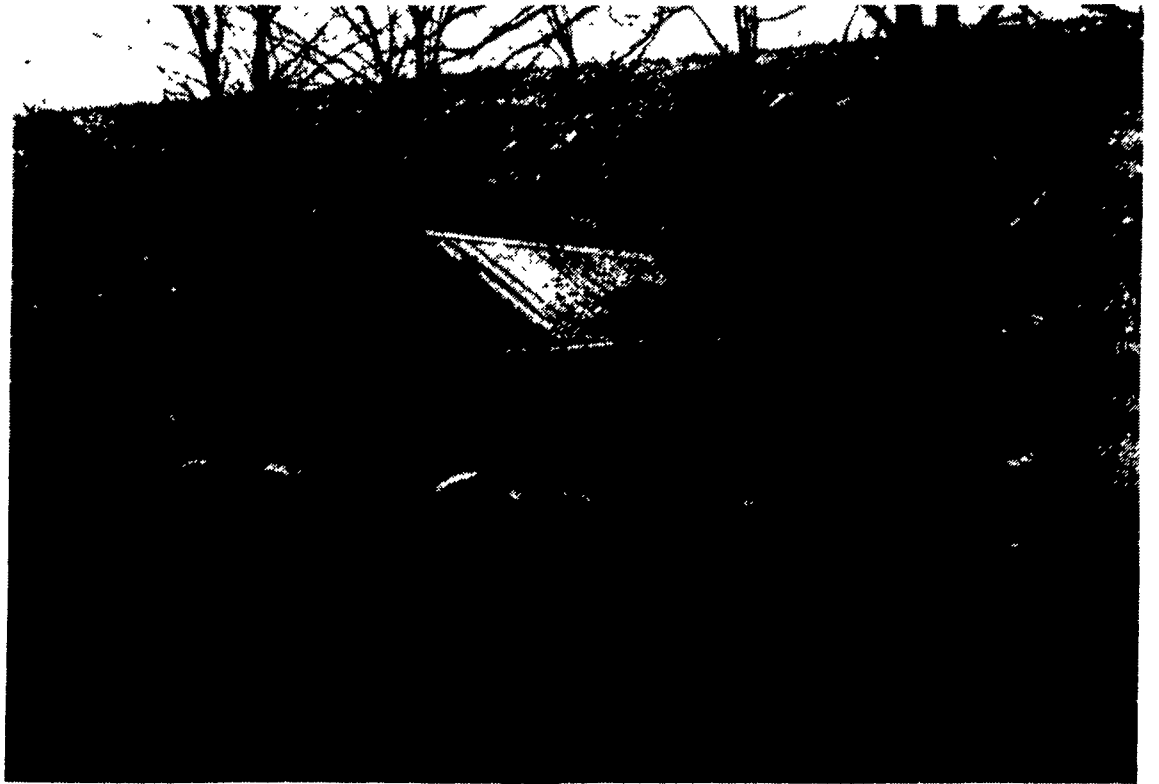


Feeding an elk. Seth Richards and Nicole Auman with Dalton, age 4, and Quinten, age 16 months.



The elk are wintered in paddocks to save the pastures for the grazing season.

(Continued from Page A1)

County, and Delmont Sunderland of Huntingdon. Richards started his elk farm with an old truck, a tractor, 100 acres, and 10 bred cows. From these 10 cows he gained eight calves in the spring of 1996. Then he bought a bull. Later in the fall of 1997 he purchased 13 more elk to bring his total to 40 animals.

"One of the advantages of elk is that I can put three in the same space as one beef or dairy cow," Richards says of his pastures and paddocks. Richards designed his own pie-shaped paddocks with centralized handling facilities. With this type of design, Seth or Nicole can feed and water several paddocks of animals efficiently. He has designed — and redesigned — round bale feeders, protective tree fences, and gravity-fed water systems — redesigned in several cases, because these powerful 500- to 1,000-pound animals like to play rough. His feed trough is secured with log chains, and boards with wire to protect trees were replaced with 1x6 rails built in a triangular shape. To protect the bull elk's velvet antlers, Richards built his round bale feeder for access from the top.

The American Elk

The Shawnee Indians called them wapiti, which means white rump. Arriving European settlers found herds throughout Pennsylvania. But by the early 1800s, the elk had been pushed out of the southern corners of the state. The very last native Pennsylvania elk was reportedly killed in 1867 near the headwaters of the Clarion River.

In the early 1900s, the Pennsylvania Game Commission purchased 145 elk for \$30 each from Yellowstone National Park and released them along with 22 from private game reserves and 10 from a wild South Dakota herd, into 10 central and northeastern Pennsylvania counties. The Game Commission conducted elk hunting seasons from 1923 until 1931 in which 98 bulls were killed. The Game Commission believed that by the mid-1960s, only 50 to 100 elk remained, their survival hampered by brainworms and poaching.

In the 1970s, to aid the state's failing elk herd, the Game Commission started creating open areas covered with clover, oats, birds-foot trefoil, timothy hay, and other crops to draw animals away from agricultural areas. Shifting the herd to a new territory helped decrease poaching and the elk's accidental ingestion of the snails that cause brainworms. Pennsylvania's herd today is estimated at between 350 and 400 animals.

At the beginning of this year, the Game Commission trapped and transferred 16 elk from Elk County to Clinton County's Sproul State Park and neighboring Elk and Moshannon State Forests, giving the elk a 450-square-mile forest range with few permanent human residents.

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