

The Winter of 1955-56

The winter of 1955-56 was extremely difficult for wildlife in Prince Albert National Park. Heavy snow and multiple winter blizzards created snow accumulations nearing 5 feet or 152 cm in the bush. A mid-winter thaw and refreeze created a thick ice crust on top of the snow. Deer tracks looked like a trench with foot holes in the bottom. The trenches were often flecked with blood from the deer's neck and shoulders where they had pushed through the crust.

There is a range of hills between the Cookson road and the south park boundary. Those hills are now treed over but in the 1950s they were open grasslands. Blizzard winds had blown snow accumulations off the hill tops. Elk and deer gathered there in large numbers to get respite from the deep snow and to graze on what little grass was available.

My Dad arranged with Alban Herzog and Richard Bader from nearby Mayview to pack hay bales to the top of those hills. It was a good distance from the road to the top of those hills and a tough slog on snowshoes to carry the heavy bales. However, they did manage to get a few to the hill tops. They may have been of minimal help to the elk. But deer are primarily browsing animals and in their emaciated condition the hay probably didn't help them much. There was a large die off of elk and deer that winter.