Media Contact: Information Service
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Transfer of the Southwestern Range and Sheep Breeding Laboratory at Fort Wingate, New Mexico, on August 1, from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, to the Bureau of Animal Industry, Department of Agriculture, was announced today by Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay. The move fa part of the broad program aimed at narrowing the scope of Indian Bureau operations and transferring responsibilities, wherever possible, to other agencies of Government for to the Indians themselves.

The Fort Wingate Laboratory was established in 1935 for the purpose of producing an improved breed of sheep and a better quality of wool through the crossing of native Navajo stock with high-grade rams. Originally the work was intended primarily for the benefit of the Navajos since sheep raising and the weaving of woolen rugs have been for many years key factors in the Tribe's economy.

The Bureau of Animal Industry, which has cooperated in the laboratory work, is assuming full responsibility under an agreement recently reached between the two bureaus. While emphasis will continue to be placed on the special needs of the southwestern Indians for rug wool, the laboratory will also stress breeding improvements for fleece and mutton production intended to benefit both Indian and non-Indian sheep producers. One of the principal reasons for the transfer was the growing recognition of the results achieved by the laboratory and the realization that its work is beneficial not merely to Navajos but to the whole sheep industry of the Southwest.

Involved in the transfer are 2,439 acres of land along with the buildings, approximately $70,000 of operating funds for the balance of the fiscal year, and the personnel required for the station operations. The director of the laboratory is Stanley L. Smith.