

T.L. Zharkikh, N.i Yasynetska, A.N. Bonovskij, N.S. Zvegintsova. A Study of the Przewalski Horse Population in the Zone of Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant // Bulletin of Moscow Society of Naturalists. Biological series – 2002.-Vol.107.-5. P.9-16.

On purpose to increase biodiversity in the biocenosis violated as a result of human activities and to maintain a balance of nature the Biosphere Reserve “Askania Nova” has launched the Programme on the Establishment of the Free-ranging Population of Przewalski Horses in Chernobyl Exclusion Zone and the Zone of Absolute Resettlement (CEZ). In 1998 the Acclimatization Centre for temporary maintenance of founders was built near Chernobyl. In 1998 and 1999 thirty one Przewalski horses from the Askania Nova Reserve and from a little zoo of Lozovski stud farm were brought there. The death rate of the imported horses is 32,3% (1999—2000), all of the Lozovski horses died. Reproductive rate is high — the Przewalski horses population has increased twofold. In 1999 foaling rate was 66,7%, in 2001 it was 80,0%. Only 1 foal of 22 born in 1998—2001 died, survival rate of young is 95,5%. At the moment (January 1, 2002) the population consists of 42 Przewalski horses, including 21 specimens born there. The proportion of horses of the best age for reproduction (6—10 years) is large (40,5%) Przewalski horses have dispersed themselves over CEZ rather promptly. Harem groups roam within 20 kilometers from the Acclimatization Centre in 3 years after their release and they go on enlarging their home ranges. Bachelor stallions can leave CEZ in search of mares. So the initial stage of the establishment of the free-ranging population of Przewalski horses in Chernobyl Zone have been finished.