

RESUME OF UTAH'S BIGHORN MANAGEMENT

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Utah State Division of Wildlife Resources' present management of Rocky Mountain bighorn is geared solely toward its reestablishment in the state. Habitat evaluations and vegetative inventories were taken on an area in north-central Utah where bighorn originally existed, but had vanished before the turn of the century. The site was additionally selected because of the absence of domestic livestock and elk competition for forage and space. Mule deer would be the major competitive force.

Plans to reintroduce bighorn started in earnest in 1959; however, it was not until 1965 that the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission and the Canadian Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources favorably responded to Utah's request for transplant stock.

Original plans called for a holding paddock to be constructed on division property immediately east of Brigham City along the Wasatch Range. A paddock of 60 acres was constructed during the summer of 1965. Three separate trapping and releases were made during the next winter.

Trapped March 7, 1966 - Wind River Mountains, Dubois, Wyoming
Released March 6, 1966

Composition: 8 mature ewes
1 two year old ram
1 two year old ewe
4 ram lambs

Trapped April 6, 1966 - Waterton Lakes National Park, Waterton, Alberta

Composition: 3 rams
4 ewes
1 year old ram
2 year old ewes

Trapped April 28, 1966 - Waterton Lakes National Park, Waterton, Alberta

Composition: 2 rams
6 ewes
1 two year old ewe
1 year old ewe

Total: 11 rams
23 ewes
34 head

Wyoming's 9 adult ewes produced 5 lambs and Waterton Lakes 11 adult ewes and 3 yearling ewes produced only 2 lambs.

During the summer of 1966 a larger paddock was completed encompassing 1,200 acres to include both summer and winter ranges. Thirty-seven bighorn were released into the large paddock in the fall of 1966, 30 of the original

animals and the 7 lambs born in the spring (4 animals of the original herd died during the summer).

During subsequent winters, snowdrifts and strong winds which ripped down portions of the fence allowed most of the herd to escape to Wellsville Mountain north of the paddock and to Weber Canyon 40 miles to the south. Observations have shown at least two generations of bighorn have been born in the state. The single largest sighting outside of the paddock is 11 head with most observations in the 2 to 4 category. There has been some mortality from shooting by deer hunters and some malicious shooting inside the paddock with no attempt to take the meat or horns.

Several modifications of the fence were made, including relocations of certain sections and using telephone poles in high wind areas. It was the intent of the division to use the stock received from Canada and Wyoming as parent stock and as numbers reached satisfactory levels, some would be released onto other habitats once supporting bighorn and now free of major forage competitors.

After modifications were completed, 8 rams and 18 ewes were captured using a capchur gun and sucostrin between December 9, 1969 and January 13, 1970 from Banff National Park in Canada. Shortly after the release in the small paddock, respiratory problems developed swiftly throughout the new stock. Cultures taken from the lungs of one adult ewe and a sacrificed lamb showed animals were inflicted with *Pasturella multocida*. It was recommended all animals be recaptured and confined in small pens and treated with shot series. With the exception of one adult ewe, all were successfully confined and vaccinated with a vaccine created from the culture. In addition, neoterramycin was administered in the drinking water. While confined, sheep were fed alfalfa hay and elk pellets. No losses after treatment were noted; however, escapes from the paddock occurred again when snowdrifts allowed passage over the fence.

Very little is known about the current status of our bighorn sheep population. Although the information is quite sketchy, we have return information on 24 sheep lost. Of these, all but about 6 were introduced animals. Of the 24 reported losses, at least 4 sheep were known illegal kills or poaching losses.

Our 1st good sightings of wild sheep were:

- November 1973 - A mature ram (probably from Canada) observed in Weber Canyon
- A young ram, and a ewe and a lamb all observed near Inspiration Point on Willard Peak. The untagged lamb should represent at least a second generation wild birth.
 - Personnel observed one ram and possibly two ewes inside the large paddock last fall (1973).
- February 1974 - In Box Elder Canyon near Mantua 3 mature and 2 younger animals were observed.

It is still the objective of the division to create a parent stock within the paddock. Immediate efforts, however, will be directed toward determining populations and areas of occurrence.