

## LEGAL BIGHORN SHEEP DEFINITIONS

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Abstract: In Idaho, bighorn sheep harvest is restricted to rams with 3/4-curl or larger horns. Participation is regulated by lottery permits. Horn pinning identification is required.

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## BACKGROUND

The bighorn ram is considered by many hunters to be one of the prized animals in North America. The premier status of bighorn sheep is based on the difficulty of hunting in severe terrain, the challenge of finding a large ram, and a relative scarcity of sheep hunting opportunities. Sheep traditionally are hunted under conservative regulations in most of North America. Idaho has followed this tradition and restricted harvest to limited entry hunts for 3/4-curl and larger rams since 1970. To allow the harvest of older rams with broomed horns, regulations were changed in 1984 to include 3/4-curl and larger horns and/or rams over 4 years of age (any ram with 3 or more annual rings visible on the horns).

## CURRENT REGULATIONS

Only bighorn sheep rams having 3/4-curl or greater horns or exceeding four (4) years of age may be taken.

Permittees successful in bagging either a Rocky Mountain or a California bighorn ram are prohibited from drawing for the subspecies again. Unsuccessful permittees may reapply after a 2-year waiting period. In order to improve drawing odds, applicants for bighorn sheep permits cannot apply for any other controlled hunt species.

## BIOLOGICAL/GEOMETRIC RATIONALE

### Legal Description

A ram shall be considered 3/4-curl if an imaginary line extending downward from the front of the base of the horn through the center of the eye socket intersects any portion of the horn.

## ENFORCEMENT/PROSECUTION

The court decides extenuating circumstances for rams under 4 years old which are short, as described above.

## INTERPRETATION TO HUNTERS IN THE FIELD

Successful controlled hunt applicants are required to view a videotape about judging a legal ram.

### PRAGMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

Any hunter taking a bighorn ram must leave that portion of the skull plate containing the upper 1/2 of the eye socket naturally attached to both the horns until after the horns have been pinned by the Department.

Any horns presented for pinning which are from a 3-year-old or younger ram which do not appear to meet the 3/4-curl regulation are measured by placing a straight object such as a ruler from the front of the base of the horn across the center of the eye socket. If the line does not intersect either horn when placed through the center of the eye socket but does intersect at least one horn when placed over the rear corner of the eye socket, the person receives a warning.

