

“Little Bo-Peep, please test your sheep” Managing disease risk in Alberta

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ABSTRACT: Mitigating the risk of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*-associated pneumonia in bighorn sheep from domestic sheep and goats has faced significant challenges. Of particular importance has been the impending risk of disease from domestic sheep and goats that, through current legislation, are permitted to utilize areas near native bighorn range. These domestic species are known to carry *M. ovi*. There have been localized outbreaks of pneumonia in southwestern Alberta, the most recent being in 2000. In response to this ongoing risk, wildlife managers from the government of Alberta have been working closely with stakeholders and other governmental agencies to develop a comprehensive plan to protect wild sheep populations. Public education and the development of a domestic/wild sheep separation policy are key components under this mandate. Furthermore, a large scale disease surveillance program was initiated in 2017 to determine the disease status of Alberta’s wild sheep populations. This program will provide baseline data that will direct adaptive disease and population management in each area. This presentation will detail the collaborative efforts in the development of bighorn sheep disease protection plan, the current state of disease surveillance, and challenges that still require attention to maintain pneumonia-free bighorn sheep in Alberta.

Biennial Symposium of Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council 22:13; 2020

KEY WORDS: disease risk, domestics, education, *M. ovi*, pneumonia, policy, protection plan, surveillance program
