

Division of Wildlife Conservation
Eddie Grasser, Director

Region V, Bethel Area Office
PO Box 1467
Bethel, AK 99559-1467



Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner

PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526
www.adfg.alaska.gov

Advisory Announcement

For Immediate Release: May 12, 2021

CONTACT: Patrick Jones, Area Biologist.

(907)543-2839 Patrick.jones@alaska.gov

Resident Hunting Opened for Stranded Musk Oxen in Unit 18

(Bethel) The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is opening a resident hunting season for musk oxen that are stranded on free-floating ice floes completely surrounded by salt water in Unit 18. The hunting season opens May 13, 2021 and residents taking musk oxen from ice floes must comply with hunt conditions specified in regulation 5 AAC 92.046 *Permits for taking incidental or stranded musk oxen*. The area affected by this announcement includes coastal marine waters adjacent to muskox populations on the Y-K Delta in Unit 18.

Hunting of musk oxen stranded on ice floes is was adopted by the Alaska Board of Game at its March 2015 meeting in Anchorage. The following hunt conditions apply to the new hunt:

- 1) Season opening by emergency order in Game Management Unit 18;
- 2) Musk oxen are stranded on free-floating ice floes completely surrounded by salt water;
- 3) A resident may harvest the stranded musk oxen without a permit;
- 4) Resident tag is waived (e.g. no tag required);
- 5) Bag limit of up to 2 musk oxen per person;
- 6) The hunter must demonstrate the ice floe conditions by submitting photographic evidence to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game within 48 hours of harvest. Please e-mail photos to Patrick.jones@alaska.gov

Survey results show that the Nunivak and Nelson Island muskox population are within management objectives. Surveys completed in June 2020 revealed a Nunivak Island population of 701 muskoxen, a level above the management objective of 500–550 musk oxen, and a 2020 Nelson Island survey minimum population count of 462 musk oxen, was within the management objective of 250–450 musk oxen. The mainland of the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta muskox population was last surveyed in 2019 and 174 muskox were observed. A muskox moratorium for the mainland is in effect until this population grows to a point a hunt become sustainable.

For unknown reasons during winter, musk oxen occasionally wander onto sea ice adjacent to their terrestrial habitat and become stranded when marine conditions cause ice movements and floes to develop before musk oxen can reach safety. Opening hunting under these specific conditions allows harvest opportunity of animals likely to be lost by drowning.

All other muskox hunting regulations in Unit 18 remain unchanged by this emergency order.

Please visit www.adfg.alaska.gov for Health Mandates: Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping in Alaska during COVID-19.

Contact Patrick Jones, Unit 18 Area Biologist, at 907-543-2839 or patrick.jones@alaska.gov with questions.