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SHEEP REPORT

by
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Volume VII
Annual Project Segment Report
Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration
Projects W-6-R-6, Work Plan E; W-15-R-1, Work Plan N

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(Printed March 1966)

WORK PLAN SEGMENT REPORT
FEDERAL AID IN WILDLIFE RESTORATION

STATE:	<u>Alaska</u>		
PROJECT NO.:	<u>W-6-R-6</u>	TITLE:	<u>Alaska Wildlife Investigations</u>
and	<u>W-15-R-1</u>	TITLE:	<u>Big Game Investigations</u>
WORK PLAN:	<u>E and N</u>	TITLE:	<u>Dall Sheep</u>
JOB NO.:	<u>1</u>	TITLE:	<u>Distribution, Abundance and Harvest</u>

ABSTRACT

The harvest of dall sheep in Alaska during 1964 and 1965 totaled 919 and 887 rams respectively. The slight decrease in 1965 is not considered significant. The mandatory harvest ticket system is working very well and in excess of 90 per cent of all harvest tickets issued were returned. Each year about 50 per cent of the persons who obtained harvest tickets failed to go hunting.

Aerial surveys of selected areas in Game Management Unit 12 revealed that production of lambs was good in 1965.

WORK PLAN SEGMENT REPORT
FEDERAL AID IN WILDLIFE RESTORATION

STATE: Alaska

PROJECT NO.: W-6-R-6 TITLE: Alaska Wildlife Investigations
and W-15-R-1 TITLE: Big Game Investigations

WORK PLAN: E and N TITLE: Dall Sheep

JOB NO.: 1 TITLE: Distribution, Abundance
and Harvest

PERIOD COVERED: January 1, 1965 - December 31, 1965

OBJECTIVES

To obtain and evaluate information on productivity, distribution and harvest of Dall Sheep.

TECHNIQUES

Each sheep hunter is required to obtain a sheep harvest ticket prior to going afield. Successful hunters must submit a report (ticket stub) within 15 days after killing a sheep. Hunters who hunted unsuccessfully or who did not hunt must submit the ticket stub within 30 days after the season closes. Hunters who fail to return tickets are sent reminder letters; a second reminder letter is sent to ticket holders who fail to respond to the first reminder.

An aerial count utilizing a 150 h.p. supercub was made of the sheep populations inhabiting the Chisana - Nabesna area (Game Management Unit 12) during early August of 1965. Sheep observed were classified as legal rams (horns 3/4 curl or larger) young rams, ewes, lambs, yearlings and unidentified.

FINDINGS

Analyses of the sheep harvest ticket returns are presented in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Alaska Sheep Harvest by Game Management Unit 1964 & 1965, as determined from Sheep Harvest Tickets.

Game Mgt. Unit	1964	1965
7	8	22
9	2	0
11	151	131
12	128	141
13	156	143
14	67	62
15	26	35/2**
16	20	16
17	12	11
19	26	44
20	182	165
21	2	3
22	2	0
23	15	11
24	57	43
25	20	19
26	41	26
Unknown	<u>4</u>	<u>13</u>
Total	919*	887

* includes 17 second sheep, legal in Brooks Range in 1964

** illegal ewes

Table 2. Analysis of Alaska Sheep Harvest Ticket Returns, 1965.

Total Tickets issued to sheep hunters	7,897
Total Tickets returned by sheep hunters	7,693 (97.4%)
Successful hunters (25% of those who hunted)	887
Unsuccessful hunters (75% of those who hunted)	2,658
Did not hunt (52.5% of those obtaining tickets)	4,148
Outstanding tickets (2.6% of tickets issued)	204
Insufficient address & miscellaneous	120
Failed to respond to reminder letters	84

In 1965, 97.4 percent of the harvest tickets were returned. This phenomenal response compares favorably with the 93.6 percent return obtained in 1964. The harvest figures are considered highly accurate, although the totals for individual Game Management Units are subject to the vagaries of the sheep hunter's tendency to be secretive about his favorite hunting sites.

The statewide harvest of sheep is down about three to five percent from 1964. No apparent pattern of decreased harvest is readily apparent although the harvest in the arctic Units, 23, 24, 25 and 26, is 25 per cent below the 1964 harvest and probably reflects the shortened season and reduced bag limit. The season opening in this area was delayed from July 20 to August 1 and the bag limit was reduced from 2 rams to 1 ram.

The present system of issuing harvest tickets to anyone holding a valid hunting license has several shortcomings. This year in excess of 50 per cent of the persons holding tickets did not hunt sheep (Table 2). Records of delinquent ticket holders reveal that non-hunters comprise the bulk of the individuals who fail to comply with provisions for submitting the harvest tickets. Perhaps a fee should be charged for harvest tickets. Initiation of a fee would require legislation.

A chronology of the harvest, Table 3, reveals that nearly 50 per cent of the harvest occurs during the first two weeks of the season, August 10 - August 23 (except in Units 23, 24, 25 and 26, which opened on August 1). Analysis of individual Units does show that hunters were active through the last week of the season, particularly in Game Management Units 12, 13 and 20. They were probably influenced by the excellent weather then prevailing.

Table 3. Chronology of 1965 Sheep Harvest by Game Management Unit

Game Mgt. Unit	No Date	AUGUST				SEPTEMBER			Total
		1-10	10-14	15-23	24-31	1-7	8-14	15-20	
?				1				1	2
7			9		5	5	1	2	22
11			31	37	22	8	16	10	124
12			34	33	12	21	19	11	130
13			41	22	33	10	20	6	132
14			29	12	4	8	2	12	58
15			11/2	11	3	3	1	5	36
16			4	2	5	1	2		14
17				3	1	2	5		11
19			2	8	10	7	4	8	39
20		2	35	35	14	18	23	21	148
21						1			1
23			1	2		4		3	10
24		3	7	12	9	4	3		38
25		3	3	2	4	2	2		16
26		6	5	10	2		2		25
Totals		14	205	190	124	94	100	79	806

Aerial Sex & Age Composition Counts

In early August, just before sheep hunting season opened, Frank Jones and Sam Snyder conducted a survey of the sheep populations in the Chisana- Nabesna area. The results of the survey are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Aerial Sex & Age Composition Counts of Dall Sheep in Alaska's Chisana-Nabesna Area - 1962 and 1965

Year	Legal	Young					Sheep		Flying	
	Rams		Rams	Ewes	Lambs	Yearlings	Unid.	Total Flying		Pr.Hr.
	Total	(%)								
1962	164		195	446	124	66	183	1,298	188	7.0 Hrs.
	(12.6)		(15)	(36)	(17.4)	(5)	(14)			
1965	106		76	165	111	34	355	847	184	4.6 Hrs.
	(12.5)		(8.9)	(19.5)	(13.1)	(4)	(42)			

Nearly half of the sheep sighted in 1965 could not be assigned to a particular sex or age category because turbulent air conditions prevented a close inspection. While these animals could not be positively classified, a large portion of them were ewes and lambs.

Three portions of the area were surveyed in 1962 and 1965; Ptarmigan Lake, the east side of Nabesna Glacier and the west side of Chisana Creek. In 1962, 354, 98 and 67 sheep were counted on the foregoing drainages; in 1965, 608, 78 and 76 sheep were counted on the same areas. This represents an increase of 243 sheep (47%). The increase should probably be assigned to good productivity and influx from adjoining areas. The relative proportions of natural increase and influx are unknown.

While no conclusions can be drawn from the study at this stage, production of lambs was very good in those segments of the population where identification of individual animals was possible (Table 4). There were 50 and 67 lambs per 100 ewes in 1962 and 1965 respectively.

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