

Proposal 207 was received by the proposal deadline but inadvertently excluded from the Board of Game proposal book for consideration at the March 2024 regulatory meeting.

PROPOSAL 207

5 AAC 92.990(30). Definitions

Repeal the age criteria for full-curl horn rams for Dall sheep hunts in Interior and Eastern Arctic Region Units as follows:

The proposed regulatory change would repeal the age criteria for a full-curl horn of a male (ram) Dall sheep as follows:

- (A) the tip of at least one horn has grown through 360 degrees of a circle described by the outer surface of the horn, as viewed from the side, or
- (B) both horn tips are broken; broken means the lamb tip is completely absent; horn tips that are chipped or cracked are not broken if any portion of the lamb tip is present; characteristics of the lamb tip include:
 - (i) a length of less than four inches,
 - (ii) the inside surface of the lamb tip is distinctly concave when compared to the remainder of the horn, and
 - (iii) the lamb tip is the section of a horn that is grown during the first six months of a sheep's life and is the section of horn distal of the first annulus, which is the swelling of the horn that forms during the first winter of life.
- (C) [THE SHEEP IS AT LEAST EIGHT YEARS OF AGE AS DETERMINED BY HORN GROWTH ANNULI.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Statewide Dall sheep populations are far below historical carrying capacities. Rain on snow events, teamed with a late spring in 2012/13, as well as similar conditions in subsequent winters, have decimated multiple cohorts of Dall sheep statewide.

Many ram groups do not have full-curl, or both horns broken. Dall sheep hunters that do not see these rams then rely on aging a sheep in the field at a distance. This method can easily lead to miscounting the annuli and result in the take of sublegal, young rams. This loss of the very few young recruiting breeding rams is of critical concern to the sustainability of the Dall sheep population's recovery.

Most hunters and even professional biologists can mistakenly miscount annuli rings on 3/4 and 7/8 curl rams on the mountainside. Many hunters cannot age the sheep when in hand, which can be documented with the high numbers of young rams being seized by the department at sealing.

Very few rams will not eventually become legal under the full curl definition by either achieving a full curl, or by breaking off both horn tips if left to mature, so having the aging option is

unnecessary and detrimental. At this time few rams are even becoming legal under the full curl definition due to hunting or environmental related mortality prior to maturity being reached.

This issue needs to be addressed Statewide, and an Agenda Change Request was submitted for the Board to do so. This proposal is being submitted if the Board decides to not take up that request during this cycle.

PROPOSED BY: Western Interior Regional Advisory Council (HQ-F23-027)
