



Advisory Announcement

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Two Dall Sheep Rams Lethally Removed Southeast of Fairbanks

(Salcha) – On Tuesday, August 5, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) lethally removed two Dall sheep yearling rams southeast of Fairbanks, near Salcha. The sheep were killed due to potential contact with domestic goats or sheep; therefore, the potential to have contracted and spread *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (*M. ovi*) or other contagious respiratory diseases to nearby Dall sheep populations was high.

The department weighed the high risk of devastating disease effects on wild sheep populations with the cost of removing two rams from the wild population, which is currently at low numbers. The long-term benefit of removing the rams to mitigate risk of disease far outweighed the biological impact of removing the rams.

Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae is a bacterium that is frequently found in the nasal cavity of domestic sheep and goats. Introduction of variants of *M. ovi* has had devastating impacts to wild bighorn sheep populations throughout the western United States and portions of Alberta and British Columbia. Once *M. ovi* is introduced to a population, there is often a large die off (up to 75–95% of the population) followed by years of poor lamb survival. Once established, *M. ovi* is nearly impossible to eradicate.

The young rams removed by the department were likely on an exploratory foray from either the Tanana Uplands or Alaska Range sheep populations, both of which are >30 miles from where the rams were removed but are the closest established sheep populations. The department received multiple reports of the sheep being observed in Salcha neighborhoods where domestic goat herds exist. The fencing holding domestic goats was inadequate to prevent the domestic animals and wild Dall sheep from mixing.

The removed rams were brought back to Fairbanks and ADF&G veterinary staff performed necropsies and collected disease (including *M. ovi*) surveillance samples from both animals. These samples were sent to laboratories for testing, and results are expected in approximately 2–3 weeks.

For more information on *M. ovi* in Alaska wildlife, visit our website: [Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae \(M. ovi\) in Alaska Wildlife: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions, Alaska Department of Fish and Game](#)

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