



July, 2016

Nelchina Caribou Herd Bulletin

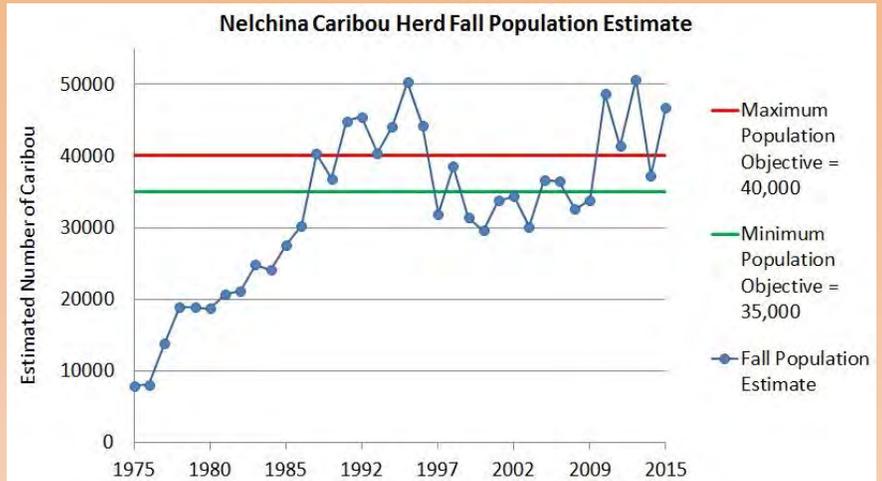
Congratulations on receiving a Nelchina caribou herd permit!

Your harvest will play an important role in the continued health of this herd.

Currently, the Nelchina caribou herd is open for harvest by Alaska residents only. The herd provides an important opportunity for many Alaskans to harvest wild game while contributing to Alaska's hunting heritage.

Please consider harvesting a cow in your upcoming hunt to help prevent this herd from outgrowing the carrying capacity of its habitat.

The Nelchina caribou herd has experienced mild winters and relatively low wolf predation over the past few years. The estimated fall population of the herd is well above the objective of 35,000 to 40,000 caribou. The 2015 summer census showed the herd to be at a 20-year high.



Fall calf to cow ratios in 2015 indicate that herd production likely exceeds mortality rates. The results of the 2016 spring parturition survey showed that 72% of radio-collared females were pregnant. These data indicate that the herd is still growing.

To maintain a healthy population of caribou, hunters need to harvest enough animals to prevent further herd growth. **Cow harvest is especially important. Population growth can't be slowed or stopped without removing females from the herd.** The reverse side of this bulletin features tips on differentiating cow caribou from bulls.

Please consider this information when planning your hunt this year!

For more information, contact the Glennallen Wildlife Conservation Team. Call (907) 822-3461, or stop by in person.

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Bull and Cow Caribou Have Antlers!

Know your target before you shoot.

Caribou Antler Facts and Hunting Tips:

- There is no reliable way to distinguish young male and cow caribou by using antlers. Cows may have larger antlers than young bulls.
- Most bulls lose their antlers by midwinter, but most cows retain antlers through April. Some cows, however, will not grow antlers at all, and some smaller bulls will not lose their antlers until April.
- The udder on a cow can look like the testicles of a bull. Only the vulva patch for a cow or penis sheath for a bull can be used for positive identification.
- If you see an animal urinate, note the direction. Cows' urine streams out behind the animal; bulls urinate forward of the penis.
- Don't shoot into a group of animals. There is a good chance your bullet will pass through one animal and wound another.

Bulls



Testicles

- Bull caribou have antlers from May through part of the winter. The oldest bulls drop antlers first, as early as November, while young bulls (yearlings and 2-year-olds) may not drop their antlers until April.

- For bulls, the presence of a penis sheath, or a forward direction of urination should be used for positive identification.

- Bulls have large antlers relative to body size.
- Young bulls typically have smaller antlers with relatively small brow tines or shovels, and often cannot be distinguished from cows by the antlers alone.

- On young bulls (1-3 years) the sex organs are less apparent.



Penis sheath

Cows



Vulva patch

- Most cow caribou have antlers from June through April of the following year.

- For cows, the presence of a vulva patch and rearward direction of urination should be used for positive identification.

- Cows have small antlers relative to body size.
- The vaginal opening is apparent when carefully viewed from the rear. The white rump patch is wider on cows than bulls.

- The antlers of cows are smaller than those of most bulls.

- Many yearling bulls and a small percentage of 2-year-old bulls can look like cows.



No penis sheath