

Hunting along the Dalton Highway on the North Slope- Unit 26B



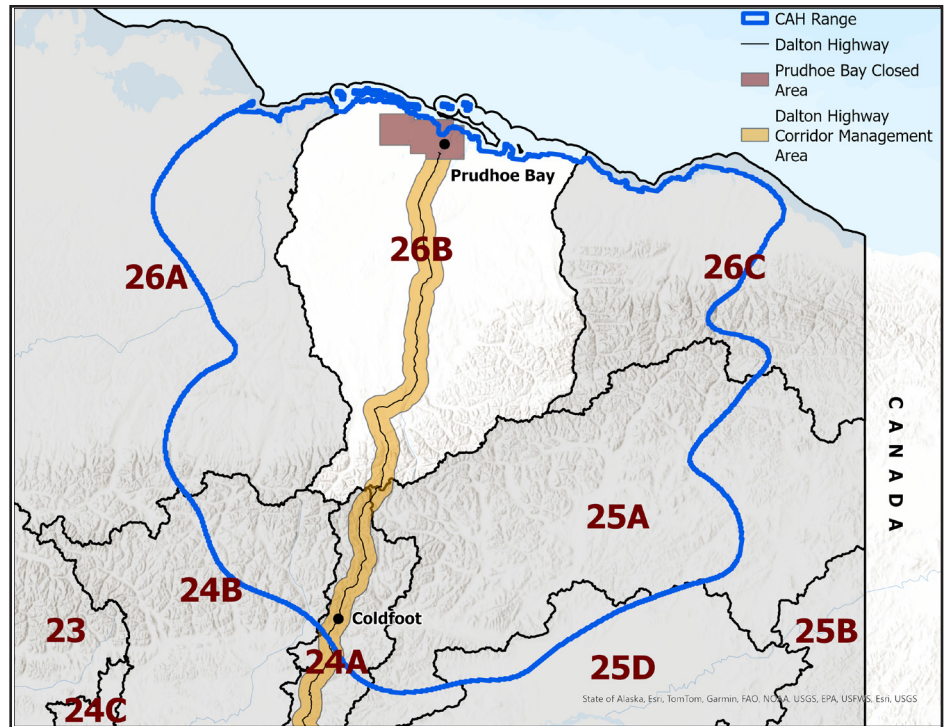
The **Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA)** extends five miles from each side of the Dalton Highway. This includes the drivable surface of the highway, from the Yukon River to the Arctic Ocean, and includes the Prudhoe Bay Closed Area.

The area within the **Prudhoe Bay Closed Area** is closed to the taking of big game. Hunting in the remainder of the DHCMA is restricted to archery only and small game may be taken by falconry. See complete information in the Alaska hunting regulations.

The Dalton Highway, also known as “The Haul Road”, is narrow, rough, steep, and mostly gravel. It’s primarily an industrial corridor with heavy truck traffic, though drivers also need to keep an eye out for motorcycles, bicyclists, and wildlife.

For detailed information about travelling the Dalton Highway Check out the Dalton Highway Visitor Guide from Bureau of Land Management.

<https://www.blm.gov/alaska/public-room/brochure/dalton-highway-visitor-guide>



Central Arctic Herd (CAH)

The bag limit for caribou in GMU **26B-remainder** (which includes the DHCMA) is five caribou (either sex) for Alaska residents and two bulls for non-residents. See 2025-2026 Alaska Hunting Regulations for more information.

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildliferegulations.hunting>

The Central Arctic herd is the most prominent caribou herd along the highway in Unit 26B. This population has been steadily growing in recent years and the most recent population estimate (2022) is approximately 35,000 animals.



Frequently Asked Questions about hunting the CAH

What is the status of the CAH?

The Central Arctic herd population is currently around 35,000 caribou and, based on birth and survival rates, is slightly growing. This is above ADF&G's management objective for this herd. In March 2024, the Alaska Board of Game increased the bag limit for the Central Arctic herd in GMU 26B based on the current population status. ADF&G wildlife biologists monitor the herd and quickly adapt if there are indications that the herd status has changed.



Should I fly in or hunt off the road?

In general, the Central Arctic herd can be found in GMU 26B in the fall and spring. Their exact whereabouts are different every year and very unpredictable. Hunting via highway access allows more mobility to find animals if groups are close enough to hike to, but be aware of the bow-only, five-mile corridor (see Alaska Hunting Regulations for GMU 26B for more information). Hiking can be extremely challenging (see next question) and many hunters use the road, so you will likely not be alone.



It is also important to keep in mind that the Dalton Highway/Haul Road is a very busy working road with truck traffic supporting oil and gas activities on the North Slope. If you choose to drive the highway, please drive safely and give the trucks plenty of space to get their job done. If you are more interested in a wilderness experience, flying is a great option but it does restrict you to the area where you are dropped off.

I've heard that hiking through tussocks is awful, is this true?

Hiking through tussocks is like hiking through a field of bowling balls. It can be extremely tiring and frustrating, particularly to those not in peak physical condition. Know your limits and be prepared for long days, especially if you end up hunting a caribou across the five-mile corridor. There are plenty of stories about hunters hiking out the five miles to camp and hunt caribou only to experience an agonizing return trip -or trips- after successfully harvesting an animal. Some hunters choose to hunt the herd in the spring when snow cover provides for the option to ski or snowshoe the five miles. Even that is physically demanding, and spring conditions may be cold and snowy.

Bears... are they north of the mountains?

Yes, grizzly bears are north of the Brooks Range, and we get reports that hunters have seen plenty of them while hunting caribou in recent years. We recommend taking precautions such as storing meat and other food away from your tent, bringing an electric bear fence (there are light, portable versions), and being aware of your surroundings.



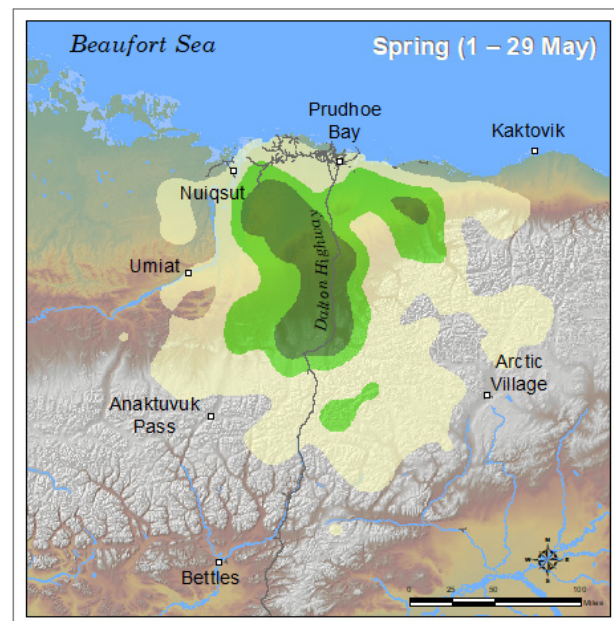
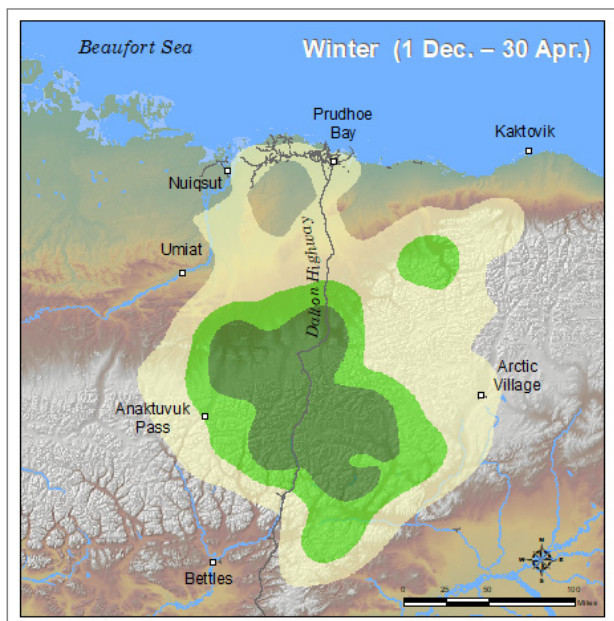
What's the best clothing? Could it snow? Bugs?

Yes. It's been known to snow in July up north. Be prepared for any weather (snow, rain, wind, sun). There are no trees and the terrain is wet and boggy. Be prepared with quality gear; shelter, synthetic or wool clothing, waterproof hiking boots and extra socks. The bugs can be bad in July and August but as it gets colder, their numbers decrease. If you want to maintain your sanity, pack a head net and bug spray.

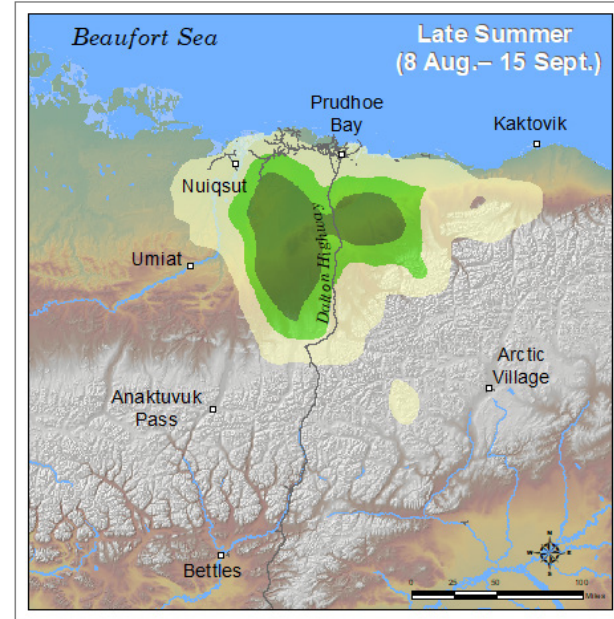
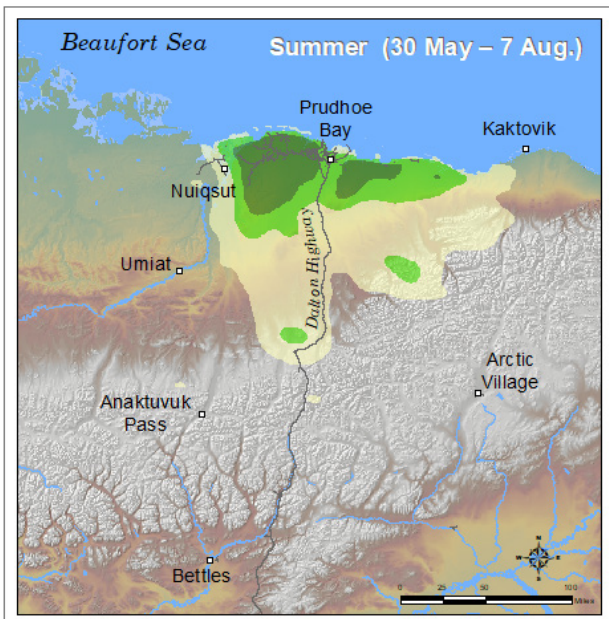
Where are the caribou?

Caribou migrate throughout their range to find food and avoid predation.

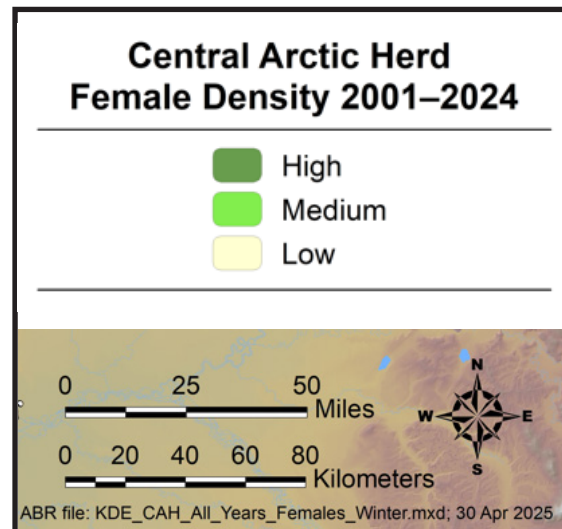
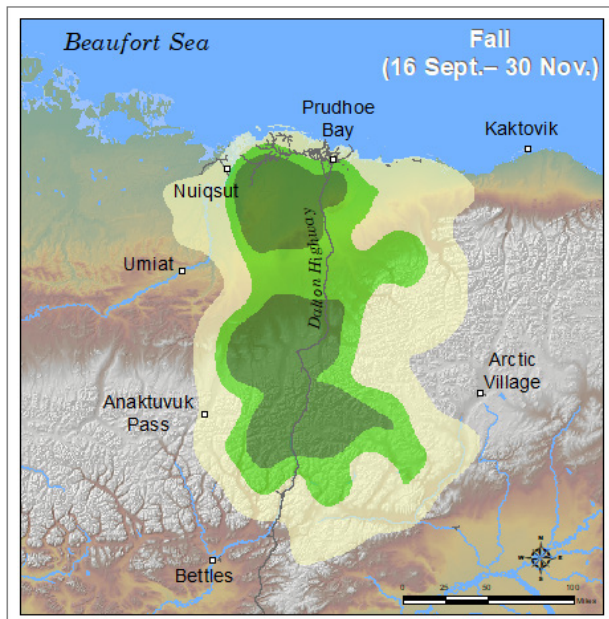
In late April, the Central Arctic herd travel from their winter range in the Brooks Range, north to the Coastal Plains of the North Slope. They give birth there to avoid predators (bears, wolves, and wolverine) and incessant pests (mosquitoes and botflies).



During the fall (July to September) the Central Arctic herd can range from the coast near Deadhorse to the northern foothills of the Brooks Range near Galbraith lake. They can be as far west as the Colville River and as far east as the Canning River.



In late September through November, the herd migrates back south to spend the winter in the mountains.

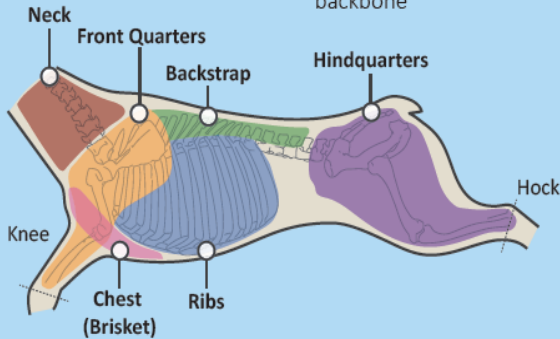


What are the meat salvage requirements?

Know what to salvage

If you shoot a moose, caribou, sheep, mountain goat, wild reindeer, deer, elk, bison, or muskox, you must salvage:

- All the neck meat
- All the chest meat (brisket)
- All the meat of the ribs
- Front quarters to the knee
- Hindquarters to the hock
- All the meat along the backbone



Be sure to check the conditions for your hunt for any additional salvage requirements. You can show respect to the animal by using all of its parts!

How do I identify cows and bulls?

Pick up a pocket ID guide at your local ADF&G office or find it on our website:

Hunting » Game Species » Caribou » More resources

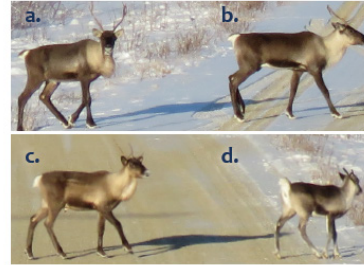
For more information and to take a caribou ID quiz go here:

ADF&G Home » Hunting » Caribou » Caribou Identification

Don't rely on antlers to determine the sex of a caribou!

Before pulling the trigger ask these questions:

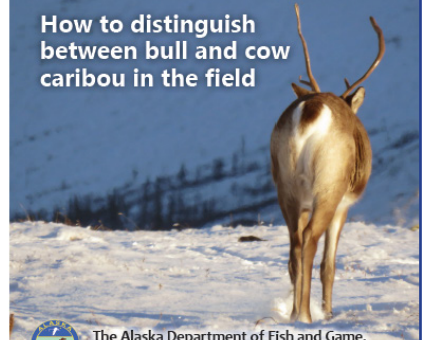
1. Does the caribou urinate forward or backward?
2. Are the testicles or penis sheath visible?
3. Is a vulva visible?
4. What is the shape of the white rump patch?



Answers: a. Young bull (penis sheath), b. Cow (no penis sheath), c. Young bull (penis sheath), d. Cow (no penis sheath). Cover photo is a bull (no vulva, heart-shaped rump patch).

Bull or Cow?

How to distinguish between bull and cow caribou in the field



The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, 2017

Bear Hunting

There is a general grizzly/brown bear season for residents and a draw permit (DB987) for nonresidents in GMU 26B. The Alaska Board of Game recently passed a regulation changing the season dates for brown/grizzly bear to align for residents and nonresidents (DB987) in GMU 26B — August 10-June 15. See the Alaska Hunting Regulations for more information.

All brown/grizzly bears require sealing within 30 days of the kill. Successful hunters must bring the unfrozen skull (separate from the hide) and hide with claws and evidence of sex naturally attached, to a department appointed sealing officer.

Highway Travel

Wildlife troopers patrol the highway. Only stop your vehicle in areas that allow you to completely get off the highway. Stopping on the highway creates a hazardous situation and could result in a ticket of up to \$1,000 if you obstruct traffic or pipeline access-ways.

For more information on driving the road see The Dalton Highway Visitor Guide.

There are no facilities along much of the Dalton highway. Be prepared to pack out what you pack in. Bring some way to manage human waste such as a "Luggable Loo" or other waste container system.

Wolf Hunting

Wolf hunting for residents and nonresidents in GMU 26B is open August 1 - April 30 with a limit of ten wolves. A nonresident locking tag is required and all hides must be sealed within 30 days of kill.

