

Chairman Spraker, and members of the Board of Game,

RC 062

You've already heard all of the primary talking points from the producers' perspective on Prop 64:

- 1) Using a model based on the lower 48 which has little relevance to Alaska
- 2) All AK sheep and goats are confined within fences on private property
- 3) No documented instance of transmission in the wild
- 4) M. ovi test results thus far show an extremely low incidence of positives (under 4%)
- 5) M. ovi is environmentally unstable, and unless conditions are absolutely perfect it cannot survive outside a live host
- 6) Removal from the Clean List would render sheep and goats illegal, with no possibility of a permit being issued, unless ADF&G regulations undergo significant change
- 7) A valid risk assessment averages the low overall numbers of animals, low prevalence of disease, low density, and a negligible risk of contact
- 8) Common sense dictates that mitigation is a more realistic course of action than elimination
- 9) We all wondered why the mountain goat which might have been exposed to domestic pathogens was released untested into the wild.

Rather than spending time repeating what others have stated so well, I thought I'd address some of the questions I heard from Board members during yesterday's testimony.

Ted:

Do you think an M. ovi-free state is possible?

Dr. Gerlach has impressed two things on us above all else over the past year. 1) There is no such thing as "zero risk", and 2) no such thing as "100% certainty". So no, a 100% M. ovi -free state is not achievable in the real world. However what is certainly achievable is a statistically significant number of animals tested, with the goal of extremely low numbers of positive animals. (Both of which were accomplished this past year.) We anticipate that number to grow as we continue to educate owners.

Did you test your herd?

This is a loaded question, since confidentiality was such a hallmark of the process, and one of the pledges that was made to allay the concerns of livestock owners who were hesitant about participation due to privacy issues. Some of us don't mind answering that question, since we were the vocal proponents of the testing process. Others may be taken aback, considering how critical the confidentiality issue was to the process.

Are people not testing due to lack of concern or out of anger at the Proposal?

Here are some of the reasons I've heard stated for not testing:

- 1) I refuse to test until I know what the consequences are if there are positives in my herd
- 2) Because no matter which way it goes the WSF will spin it to prove that Prop 64 is justified
- 3) The cost, even with help from the Farm Bureau, is prohibitive (one remote livestock owner was quoted over \$1000)
- 4) I live so far from sheep habitat that it doesn't apply to me
- 5) I plan to do it, just haven't gotten to it yet

Electric fence/LGD's -- We also use electric fences and have four livestock guardian dogs (a number I don't really recommend to most people). Good luck to any moose, fox, eagle, or raven that tries to sneak into one of our goat pens, never mind what would happen to any two-legged potential predators.

Nate:

Would voluntary premise registration work?

Probably not, but let me ask this in return: how would gun owners respond to a group attempting to force them to comply with the same list of demands, including premise registration, permits, inspections, import regulations, and a mandatory testing program? Knowing that is how every government who has confiscated guns started the process makes people justifiably leery about having all of their personal information put into a database. But whether it's about owning guns or goats, Americans have a general dislike and distrust of having the details of their lives catalogued and databased. NAIS (the National Animal ID System) was defunded and deconstructed in 2010 due to an almost universal refusal of the American public in all 50 states to participate.

Is M. ovi free achievable?

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Sense of concern/caution for wild sheep

That concern is warranted, but in equivalent proportion to the concern and caution that must be used when you consider what action, if any, should be taken here. Never before in the history of our country have law-abiding citizens who are pursuing a farming hobby with traditional livestock been threatened with having their lifestyle, livelihood, and food supply declared to be a criminal activity, which removal from the Clean List would do. As an agent of the state of Alaska you have the unenviable challenge of having to mentally separate your inherent concern for sheep from straight-ahead logic in order to arrive at a science-based, objective, and reasonable decision that will not favor one industry over another.

It's striking that people are not testing out of fear.

We've all read our history books. Every civilization and regime that has ever reached the point of confiscating guns or other personal property has started the process with registration and identification of owners. *(When Jews were ordered to wear a yellow star no one dreamed that it was the first step toward an unthinkable outcome.*

Value of registration?

Besides adding value when selling registered stock, one of the chief values is simply knowing who that animal is, what breeder or herd it came from, who its parents are, etc. This morning while driving in to Anchorage I got a call from a guy who was considering buying a buck we had sold earlier this summer to a young lady who was no longer able to keep them, and put them up for sale. In addition to the carefully chosen compatible breeding pair she bought from us, she had also purchased a doeling from another local breeder, who had brought some of their does to us for stud service. The caller asked if those two would make a good breeding match. It only took a minute to check both names in the "planned pedigree" program in the ADGA Genetics database to realize they were paternal half siblings. That to me is the greatest value of registration.

Re-shaping dialogue

That is currently the greatest need in order to move forward. Negotiations toward a mutually agreeable settlement are conducted between peace-seeking peers during a cease-fire in a neutral zone, not in one's own

trenches while staring down the muzzle of a loaded cannon. Thank you so much for suggesting the Town Hall meeting, that's exactly the forum we need to move from an adversarial relationship to a constructive one.

Stosh:

Is there a paper trail when goats are transferred?

With registered animals, yes. The certificate of registration acts as the bill of sale and includes the name of the breeder, current owner, and pedigree of the animal. Not everyone registers, and there's no requirement that such a sale be formalized in writing.

Larry:

Would you be willing to dispatch positive animals?

That would depend in part on whether the WSF is willing to make good on their oft-repeated promise of fair market value replacement of animals. A good milking doe producing 3500 lbs. of milk annually is certainly not going to be replaced for the same cost as the young kids we bring up every couple of years. I, like Tina, have a couple of cherished goats that I would put into quarantine before I would consider culling them, but for most of the herd it would be a negotiable matter.

Alaskans are proud & independent

You got that right!!! Whether it's about guns or goats, we all agree on one thing – as long as we are law-abiding citizens behaving in an ethical and responsible fashion in our community and our state, we despise unnecessary government intrusion into our lives and privacy.

What would the key of education be?

Educating the livestock community about the concerns of M. ovi, and preventing co-mingling
Encouraging fellow goat owners to test their herds in the on-going program
Doing outreach through cooperative extension and 4-H circles to get our youth on board
Mentoring goat newbies as they join the community

Teresa:

Chronology/timeline of Prop 90/64

2014-2015: Thinhorn Sheep Initiative meetings taking place every 6-8 weeks, with strategies being formed to bring Alaskan livestock owners into line, long before any producers were ever contacted.

May 2015: The infamous Prop 90 was filed. No producers were contacted; the first time any of us knew of the proposal was 7 months later.

Dec. 23, 2015: Dr. Gerlach circulated an email to a handful of producers that he had addresses for, alerting us that Prop 90 was filed, and that the comment period deadline was coming up in about 8 weeks.

Jan. 2016: There was discussion about Prop 90 on several FB groups, but the prevailing attitude was that it was so ludicrous it must be either a bad joke or sent in by a crazy person. A few of us began to take it seriously, and I called a meeting to invite all sheep and goat producers to meet at the Matanuska Experiment Farm.

Feb. 20, 2016: First meeting with Dr. Gerlach and sheep/goat producers. Five people showed up.

Feb. 27, 2016: Amy Seitz called and said she had reached out to WSF to request a meeting in advance of the Board of Game meeting, and asked me if I would attend on behalf of the Alaska Dairy Goat Ass'n. I agreed to come on the condition that at least one other producer be included (Tina Judd).

Mar. 2, 2016: First meeting with WSF, DEC, DNR, AKFB, and producers. At that meeting WSF first stated that they would cover testing costs up to \$400 K.

Mar. 18-29: Board of Game meeting with public comments and live testimony similar to this weekend.

Spring-Summer 2016: 2-3 meetings with WSF to discuss what measures would be reasonable.

Summer 2016: NAPgA undertakes M. ovi testing protocol to gather data in defense of pack goats. Results showed less than 4% infected, and only 5 out of 83 premises. Small group of AK producers did an off-the-record submission of sheep & goat samples, of which there was only one positive.

Fall-winter: Meetings on hold due to hunting season & holidays

Mar. – June 2017: Approximately five meetings held with WSF, DEC, DNR, AKFB, and producers. WSF conceded that any natural barrier/boundary would trump the “15 air miles” clause, and that double fencing was not feasible. Testing protocols were discussed, and the decision was made to embark on a program of M. ovi testing with a protocol matching that used in 2016 by NAPgA. Dr. Gerlach coordinated these efforts. An option of quarantining positive animals as opposed to culling them was agreed upon by all. *(It was nicknamed the “Fluffy” scenario, and there was never a mention of exporting as an option, as was mentioned in the Thursday meeting.)*

The USDA grant for ADRU lab was still active, and since WSF began attaching strings to their highly publicized offer to contribute to costs, the AK Farm Bureau stepped up to cover vet costs for collection and handling over the three separate tests.

July 2017? Prop 90 was re-filed under its new designation of Prop 64. (Not certain what date it was re-filed).

August – October 2017: Herds began the testing protocol in August, with most completing the 3rd test by October.

(There are four more years left of a five-year grant, so we anticipate more data to come as more owners participate.)

Tom:

Appreciated the dog analogy

It's commonly said that goats are the “missing link” between pets and livestock. On the one hand they are dairy animals, producing babies in the spring, and 8-12 lbs. of milk daily from spring through fall (for a yearly average of 2500 – 3500 lbs.)—on the other hand every goat in the pen knows her name, they each have their own personality quirks, and all of them will come to the word “Raisins!”

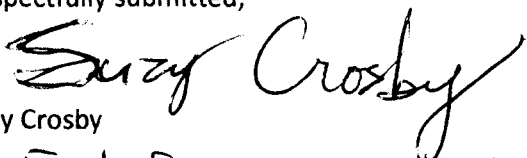
Do you vaccinate?

The answer you heard today was no, and that is reflective of probably 60 to 70% of goat producers in this area. (I can't answer for sheep.) The first issue is being willing to use the milk and meat from animals that have been injected with foreign compounds – the risk does not match the reward, since these diseases are rare (typically tetanus & Clostridia). These conditions are also treatable when caught promptly.

Most of the diseases that could severely impact a domestic herd (CAE, CL, and Johne's) have no vaccine available, the only logical course is prevention. Most owners test their herds annually to verify that their animals are free and clear of those diseases. Over the last 10 years it's become almost a condition of sale to request to see a breeder's most recent whole-herd test results.

Thank you all for taking the time to thoughtfully and carefully consider all of the facets of this issue. As you consider whether to take action on Prop 64, I would advise you to take a good look down the road at all of the ramifications and costs, and be sure you are prepared to own and defend every aspect of your decision, from constitutionality to the cost of implementation and the logistics of enforcement. You will need the wisdom of Solomon to sort this out, and I thank you for your service to this board.

Respectfully submitted,



Suzy Crosby

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