

Alaska Board of Game

November 12, 2017 Public Meeting

Topic: Proposal 64 related to domestic sheep and goat transmission of *M. Ovi* to wild sheep, muskox and mountain goats in Alaska

Meeting Summary

The Board of Game held a town hall meeting on Sunday, November 12 at 4:30 p.m. to provide additional opportunity for the public to discuss concerns with regards to proposal 64 related to domestic sheep and goats, and wild sheep populations. Nearly 50 people attended, including all board members, representatives from ADF&G, domestic sheep and goat owners, representatives of the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF), Alaska Farm Bureau Inc., Division of Agriculture, advisory committee members, and sheep hunters. The audio of the meeting was streamed online for the public to listen and is available online at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.meetinginfo&date=11-10-2017&meeting=anchorage>.

Much of the discussion focused on questions and concerns related to testing domestic animals for *M. Ovi*. including testing protocols, results, costs and impacts. Dialogue among the participants resulted in finding common ground for minimizing impacts to the owners while protecting wild sheep populations as much as is humanly possible. Solutions discussed for moving forward include:

- Continue with meetings of an expanded working group with a professional facilitator, preferably from the university;
- The state veterinarian to finish initial testing and design a protocol for continued monitoring;
- Increased outreach and encouragement for testing domestic sheep and goats;
- WSF to meet with the state veterinarian to find ways to help fund testing;
- Importation regulations need to be modified to require testing to assure only disease-free animals are brought into the state, specifically requiring *M. Ovi* testing.

The following list provides some of the questions and concerns expressed by the attendees during the meeting. Readers are strongly encouraged to listen to the audio for the full discussion.

- State veterinarian needs to finish his initial testing.
- More time is needed to develop a testing protocol.
 - o The current testing protocol for *M. Ovi* is three separate nasal swabs three to four weeks a part, and a serology test.
- The cost for *M. Ovi* nasal swap testing is \$50 per nasal swab; \$7 per serum test.

- What is the status and expectation of a domestic animal that tests one positive out of three nasal swabs?
- What are the protocols for animals testing positive? Can they be isolated from the herd to live out its life?
- Registered domestic animals are already tested for other pathogens; not all domestic animals are registered.
- Registered animals are valuable and can be sold for production. Non-registered animals can be sold for slaughter.
- Why are their strings attached with funding from WSF for testing?
 - o WSF needs to be able to provide a measure for progress for reducing the risk before paying for tests.
- Mandatory registration and testing is concerning to owners for protecting privacy and animals.
- Need mapping of wild sheep, mountain goat and muskox habitat areas.
- How many wild sheep are showing positive for *M. Ovi* in Alaska?
 - o Alaska, Northwest Territories, Northern BC, and Yukon provinces are *M. Ovi* free; sheep in Southern BC are infected.
- Has there ever been cause of death by *M. Ovi* identified in thin horn sheep?
 - o Yes; in 1988, all Dahl sheep in the Toronto zoo that were exposed to *M. Ovi* died.
- *M. Ovi* free is preferred option to WSF over fencing requirements and 15 mile buffer; how do we get there?
- The working group hopes to meet before the end of the year.