

yilíkʷlɬkn (Bighorn Sheep) Diseases



Background

yilíkʷlɬkn in the southern Okanagan region have been experiencing a steady population decline. This decline is theorized to be due in part to infection by pneumonia or *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (*M. ovi*), psoroptes (*Psoroptes cuniculi*) mites and Bluetongue contributing to overall poor yilíkʷlɬkn health. The widespread reduction of available and suitable ranges, and increased human pressure have also been identified as compounding factors to their decline.

Psoroptic Mange

- Psorptic (“sore-op-tic”) Mange is a skin disease caused by tiny Psoroptes mites that live on an affected animal's skin
- These mites primarily infest the ears and body, consuming the surface skin, which can cause weeping sores, hair loss, inflammation, scabs, crusting, and poor haircoat condition.
- Since the 2011 discovery of the first Okanagan case in yilíkʷlɬkn populations have declined by around 60%.
- Other strains of this parasite have caused further decline.



Bluetongue

- Bluetongue is a viral, non-contagious disease spread by biting midge insects. Symptoms, include ulcers, sores, painful hooves, lameness and reproductive problems.
- In 2021, 8 of 12 collared yilíkʷlɬkn near Grand Forks and 9 of 22 collared yilíkʷlɬkn in the south Okanagan died from suspected or confirmed blue tongue.
- In March 2022, population declines of ~75% in Grand Forks and ~40% in the south Okanagan were documented.

Mycoplasma Ovipneumoniae

- *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (*M. ovi*) is a bacterial species commonly found in the nasal cavity and sinuses of domestic sheep and goats.
- In yilíkʷlɬkn, *M. ovi* has been associated with large all-aged die-offs due to pneumonia, often followed by years of low lamb birth and survival rates.
- In July 2020, *M.ovi* was confirmed in the south Okanagan yilíkʷlɬkn populations



This photo demonstrates infected ears.

Help Us Continue Monitoring

- Collared bighorn ewes with lambs at heel: Any photos of collared ewes/lambs and any identifiers such as number tags, location, and time.
- Coughing or sick mountain goats and yilíkʷlɬkn: Clinical signs of sick sheep may include coughing, runny nose, laboured breathing, and lethargic behaviour.
- Crusty, scabs or poor coat condition animals: Any sick-appearing mountain goats, yilíkʷlɬkn, feral horses, rabbits, or hares should be immediately reported.

Please send in all sightings you think may be important to:
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