

New Findings Suggest *Movi* is More Widespread in Alaska's Wild Sheep and Goats

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(Fairbanks) — New laboratory results received by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game late last Friday have reported detection of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* ("*Movi*") in nine more Dall's sheep and three more mountain goats — that's in addition to the initial discovery of the bacteria in four Dall's sheep and two mountain goats announced March 13. The findings confirm the detection of *Movi* in Dall's sheep in Game Management Units 12, 13A, 20A, 25C, 26B, and 26C, and in mountain goats in 15B.

"We're sharing these findings with Alaskans as we receive them," said Bruce Dale, Division of Wildlife Conservation director. Numerous samples are currently queued to be analyzed.

Based on preliminary analysis, three strains of *Movi* have been identified in Dall's sheep. All animals sampled appeared disease-free and the department has no evidence that *Movi* has caused sickness or death in Alaska's wild sheep or goat populations.

Sometimes found in domestic and wild sheep and goats in the Lower 48, *Movi* is considered a pathogen because it impairs hosts' respiratory cilia from clearing bacteria that enter the lungs normally at each breath. *Movi* has been associated with pneumonia outbreaks in Lower 48 bighorn sheep, often resulting in significant die-offs.

The presence of *Movi* in an animal does not mean it is or will become sick. More than 100 known *Mycoplasma* species exist, including *Movi*, and evidence suggests that virulence — the ability to infect and cause disease — varies between *Movi* strains. The ability of *Movi* to cause pneumonia is impacted by multiple stressors including poor nutritional condition and/or environmental factors such as extreme weather. Both domestic and wild sheep and goats can carry the bacteria while showing no signs of illness.

The department has collected surveillance samples from Dall's sheep and mountain goats throughout most of mainland Alaska for years. In response to the recent findings, the department plans to intensify *Movi* surveillance efforts in Dall's sheep, mountain goats, and other Alaska wildlife in collaboration with the USDA Animal Disease Research Unit and the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Pullman, Washington. Department staff will also monitor the affected wildlife populations.

"We obviously have more to learn about *Movi* in Alaska," said Dale. "The recent laboratory results provide a starting point for seeking more information about this pathogen."

For more information about *Movi* findings in Alaska, see the frequently asked questions at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=hottopics.movi>

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