



PRESS RELEASE

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Respiratory Pathogen Confirmed for First Time in Alaska Dall's Sheep and Mountain Goats

(Anchorage) – A strain of bacteria known to cause pneumonia in Lower 48 bighorn sheep has been detected for the first time in Alaska Dall's sheep and mountain goats.

Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae (*Movi*, for short), described as a respiratory bacteria that can cause disease in susceptible hosts, was recently confirmed in four Dall's sheep within a sample of 136 and in two of 39 mountain goats. The Dall's sheep testing positive for *Movi* were all in Game Management Unit 13A; all were taken by hunters and appeared healthy. The mountain goats were live captured and released in Southeast and on the Kenai Peninsula and showed no sign of illness; only samples from goats on the Kenai tested positive.

"Our initial research has confirmed *Movi* in a small number of Dall's sheep and mountain goats in relatively isolated areas of the state," said Division of Wildlife Conservation Director Bruce Dale, adding that Alaska's Dall's sheep and mountain goat populations overall are healthy.

"We are not aware of any pneumonia outbreaks or die-offs in Dall's sheep or mountain goats related to this bacterium."

The department has collected surveillance samples from Dall's sheep and mountain goats throughout most of mainland Alaska for several years, sending them over the last eight months to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Disease Research Unit. That collaborative effort is credited for the *Movi* detection.

"Monitoring the health of Alaska's wildlife populations is part of what wildlife managers do," Dale said. "Detecting *Movi* in Dall's sheep and mountain goats increases our knowledge about the health of Alaska's populations."

Movi is sometimes found in domestic sheep, goats, and wild sheep and goats in the Lower 48, among other hoofed animals. It has been identified as a pathogen in Lower 48 bighorn sheep pneumonia outbreaks that have resulted in significant die-offs. Pneumonia from *Movi* can develop as the result of multiple stressors including poor nutritional condition and/or environmental factors such as extreme weather, or high population density.

Both domestic and wild sheep and goats can carry the bacteria while showing no signs of illness.

Movi is considered a pathogen because it impairs the hosts' respiratory cilia from clearing bacteria that enter the lungs normally at each breath. This can allow other more virulent bacteria to remain in the lungs to proliferate and cause pneumonia.

The department plans to continue surveillance for *Mycoplasma* bacteria, including *Movi* research 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. 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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