



## Contact Rocky Mountain Bighorn Foray Incident in Snake Mountains, November 2016, Elko County, Nevada, USA

Kari Huebner

The morning of November 14, 2016, I noticed that the GPS collared ram from the Contact Rocky Mountain Bighorn Herd (Unit 074), had dispersed south from the Contact area, all the way through the Snake Mountains and was just above Antelope Peak (Unit 075). He had only been there for 12 hours. I went out to see what other bighorn might be with him. The week prior he had been spotted with 2 other rams (one bigger, one smaller), 3 ewes, and a lamb. I spotted him on the ridge just up from the Antelope Peak Ranch. He was with another ram that was slightly smaller (they both ended up being 5 year olds). The ranch allowed me access to get closer to the bighorn. I immediately noticed that they had approximately 25 domestic goats and 5 unshorn domestic sheep grazing in a meadow below the ridge. They were about ½ mile apart at this point.

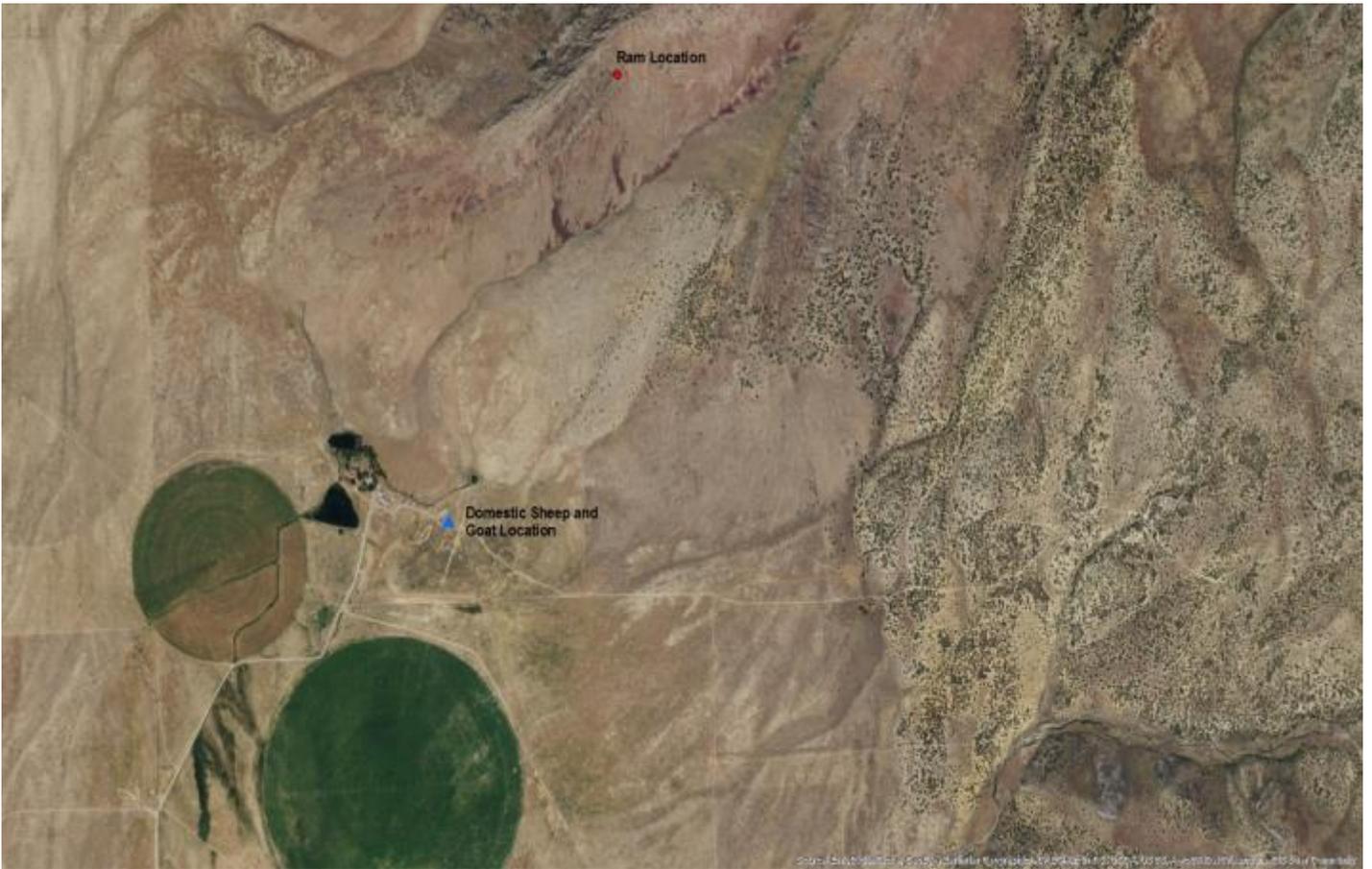
I contacted my supervisor Tom Donham and after discussing the situation we decided the best course of action would be to dispatch the two wandering rams. The Contact herd experienced a disease event in 2014. The past two years several lambs had been recruited into the population. There is a known to be domestic sheep grazing on Stormy Mountain, where the rams had passed through the day before. We also know that the bighorn in the East Humboldt's are a potential disease vector at this time. The rams had traveled 34 miles south in the previous two days and the East Humboldt's were only 14 miles from their current location. All of these factors resulted in the decision to euthanize the bighorns. Veterinarian, Dr. Peri Wolff was contacted as well as Division Chief, Brian Wakeling.

Travis Allen met me at the site. We had two 30.06 rifles and snuck within 200 yards of the rams. The collared ram was dispatched at 667029 4574069 and the uncollared ram at 667069 4574100. We removed the heads and most of the lung tissue. It was 4:45pm at this point and getting dark so we did not have time to salvage any other portions of the bighorn. The heads and lungs were put in the freezer at the Elko office, awaiting transport to Reno for testing. Both animals were in great shape and had no clinical signs of sickness.

The only other members of the public that were notified of this event were Jim Naveran, the ranch owner and his employee, Phillipe. We explained that we were not necessarily removing the bighorn because of their flock, but of the lack of knowledge of what they may have already been in contact with and where they might be headed or back to their original herd.

Submitted by:

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Map showing the proximity of the bighorn to the domestic livestock.

