



WILD SHEEP INITIATIVE/WORKING GROUP JULY 2022 MEETING NOTES

In-Person/Virtual Zoom at Summer WAFWA Meeting

Oklahoma City, OK, July 14, 9 am - Noon CDT



Decisions and major assignments from meeting are highlighted in yellow

In person: Members: Andy Holland, Colin Gillin, Darren Bruning, Amber Muning, Frank Quamen, new BLM rep – Daryl Ratajczak, Brian Logan – USFS; Others in attendance: Anne Justin Allen – AZGFD, Mike Scott – NDOW, Leslie Hay – USFS, Brian Wakeling – MFWP, Jim Heffelfinger, Rick Ward – IDFG, Casey Stemler – USFWS, Mark Labhart(?) – OR commissioner, Dax Mangus – UDWR, Mike Canning – UDWR, Scott Sprague – AZGFD, Jordan Menge – PF, Elaine Eqigman – ODWC, Jen Psyllakis – WAFWA President BC Director, Reid DeWalt – CPW, Elise Goldstein – NMDGF, David Bergman – APHIS-WS, John Silvosky – TPWD, Brian Wolfer – ODFW, Kelly O’Connor - TWS

Remote: Members: Anne Hubbs, Daryl Lutz, Doug McWhirter, Kevin Hurley, Holly Miyasaki, Don Whittaker, Todd Nordeen, Froylan Hernandez, Will Moore, Nathan Galloway; Others in attendance: Kimberlee Beckmen - ADFG, Kerry Mower – NMDGF, Nate LaHue – NDOW, Patty Klein – USFS, Brian Dreher – CPW, Esther Rubin – AZDGF; Curtis King and Taffy Mercer- NAPGA.

Test & Remove Project

Mike – History of Test & Remove. See many but not all older-aged ewes as carriers. Experimenting with this for years.

New projects started with T&R in Wyoming and other areas

Adjustments to processes and decision making with T&R made along the way.

T&R spreadsheet and review (Examples on spreadsheet from SD, NE, NV, some from WA and Hells Canyon)

Nate – modifications and improvements being done to the Biomeme unit with Dan Walsh and others

Andy – Has Frances or anyone looked at age of ewes for possible removal based on age vs the Biomeme?

Mike – Yes, think there has been a correlation with age but may not be strong. Incorporate age in the data to help evaluate that relationship.

Andy – challenges with getting hands on sheep more than once and in difficult places

Nate – Had a 2 year old ram that was a shedder

Patty Klein – going to be working with Dan on improvements with Biomeme

Mike – further review of spreadsheet Data Fields

Andy – can body condition help with evaluation?

Mike – Body condition hasn’t been a good judge of Movi status for Nevada; Continued review of T&R spreadsheet.

Holly – how were ages determined?

Mike – ball-park age from field biologist based on deciduous teeth replacement, teeth staining, gumline recession

Don – At capture, record clinical signs

Mike – hair molt as a possible metric for Movi status but not fully reliable (really a marker of raising a lamb or not), anything can be included for clinical signs

Don – observations on progression of the disease would be helpful with reporting

Mike – **wants everyone to start entering their information. Will be on the cloud. Goal to have entered by October 2022 (after meeting I decided we can wait until end of November to get all data entered!)**

Unknown Speaker – Can we use this data federally with states and any association with federal allotments

Mike – yes, states can help with that

Kevin – October wish point but wondering about devoting January meeting to T&R 2.0 Workshop focusing entire Wednesday meeting to this topic.

Mike – Great idea!

Anne – Not all states are doing T&R, like Arizona, but may in the future

Mike – We have fallen off on disease tracking information which would be nice to have updated from states. Get T&R and Disease Events data updated – please!

Seeing bighorn to bighorn transmission which is hard to keep track of for all disease

Unknown – Federal folks can help where needed.

Working Dogs for Conservation - Pete Coppolillo Exec Dir (406-290-9453, pete@wd4c.org); Aimee Hurt, Director of Special Projects (406-529-1943, aimee@wd4c.org), website: www.wd4c.org

Kevin – Slide show, One page protocol for sample collections

Mike – If states have captures coming up, how would funding work for states

Kevin – Grant in Aid with WSF or contact Kevin to figure out a way

Holly – where are they based out of

Kevin – split between Bozeman and Missoula

Holly – capturing in Salmon area so may be able to contribute

Elise – Using dogs in desert may have different results, it has worked well with genetic works for desert animals. Just an FYI when working with desert sheep – very low humidity and dry air!

Kevin – Yes, will pass that long and encourage others to participate with desert sheep

Holly – who to go through?

Kevin – Go through Kevin as the conduit

Brian Logan- Share a written perspective and will encourage federal folks to work with states in support.

Will follow up with Kevin

Kevin – Will share pdf

Major Happenings in Wild Sheep Management/Conservation efforts

Kevin – Grant in Aid through end of July, strongly favor projects with collaboration with chapters/affiliates

Holly – Commission approved BHS Management Plan in May – How do I update our bighorn occupied habitat?

Mike – send to Mike, keeping track of who is submitted updates and when and will incorporate into the westwide GIS shapefile.

Mike - Summer helicopter captures for California and desert bighorn being conducted in Nevada. We have always struggled in winter time with overheating with all animals in their winter coat. Last August 23-26, 2021 we conducted helicopter captures for California bighorn involving T&R project in northern Nevada. Captured 31 animals, only gave IV on one animal. Restricted timing of captures primarily to mornings and were typically shutting down at noon when air temps were over 90 degrees. Conducted desert bighorn June 27-28, 2022 in Muddy Mtns east of Las Vegas for translocation to Utah. Started 5 a.m each morning with air temps around 92-93 degrees. Sunshades over each processing table. Erected large tarp above the transport trailer (shading the sun side) along with 2 large fans (6 ft tall, one was an evaporative cooling fan) ran off of generator. Captured 32 animals, stopped about 9 a.m. each morning when air temp was 100 – 102; had thermometer in the trailer that typically read 5 degrees cooler than outside temp. Animal temps on mountain were 99 – 103 and most of the animal temps first taken at base camp were 101 – 104. But the best thing was how quickly their rectal temps dropped on the processing tables 1-2 degrees before they were moved into the trailers. It's all about their very short summer coat! Only had to give IVs to 2 of them. A lot of skeptical folks initially with Utah and Nevada but all involved at the end of the capture were praising the operation and conducting summer

helicopter net gun captures. Another California bighorn helicopter capture planned for August 3- 5, 2022.

Rusty is now WSWG in for Utah. Captured sheep in southern NV and moved to nursery facility. Will use to augment/reintroduce desert bighorns, killed 3 lions around the fenced-in facility located in northern Utah.

Desire from Wildlife Health Committee to develop Ungulate Capture Timing Guidelines on ambient temp, animal physiology, timing of lamb drop, etc. For the Muddy Mtn desert bighorn capture, most of the lambs born in early February so were large enough at the time of the late June capture. Air temp was 100 - 102 degrees when stopped

Holly – was wondering about the lambs but Mike answered the question with February lambs.

Amber – narrow window so may not be able to conduct captures like that in Arizona. Slight sedation with captures to help with heat loss

Andy – Is anyone adjusting helicopter costs with fuel prices

Don in OR and Will in WA also are allowing helo vendors to increase contract prices

Mike – we are allowing our 3 current helicopter capture contractors to increase their prices for a 2-yr contract extension. 2 of the vendors were requesting about a 15% increase in costs

Brent – moved 83 sheep last winter from the Missouri River Breaks and sheep numbers have tanked in the Little Belt Mountains and trying to figure out source. We think we had 1 or 2 animals that were positive for Movi in the translocation complement. Tendos still doing fine and may be adding more sheep there. Large scale effort in collaboration with Montana State University to evaluate contact risk factors with domestics/wild sheep.

Mike – Brent will share more information on this collaborative research in an email to all of us.

Capture and Handling Guidelines

Mike – Shared the current version of each of the Guidelines on screen including concept that there will be a clickable Table of Contents for each Chapter that folks can quickly move to a particular section to read up on a specific item/process

Animal Health and Vet Care Chapter – Anne Justice Allen, Chair

Neonate capture – Marcus Bloom, Chair,

Helicopter Net Gun – Eric Rominger, Chair

Translocation – Has a good skeleton that Mike is working on

Collaring and Marking – Kesia Manlove, Chair, has had to hand this off to others due to workload; Mike will assign a new lead.

Andy – Mary Wood, Lisa Wolfe and others at the CPW Foothill Research facility out of Fort Collins are still willing to test various collar types/shapes, configurations, tightness, seasonal changes, etc. to evaluate best management practices and humane treatment of animals involving collaring and marking. Will reach out to them.

Chemical Immobilization – Todd Nordeen, Chair

Drop Nets – Vern Bleich, Chair

Base Camp operations,

Online review of how this might look on website, with active links, photos and videos, references, etc.

Active links will be created throughout the Chapters that will direct folks back to other sections, primarily Animal Health Chapter that will be “one stop shopping” for most animal health and vet care guidelines that are consistent across all the capture methods.

Kevin – Vern is available to help finalize this; Mike will reach out to him on helping.

Mike – If you have captures/darting efforts coming up, please consider videotaping the process

Holly – was just involved with videographer in documenting an Idaho bighorn capture event which could be really useful in our guidelines. Mike will coordinate with her on trying to get snippets from the videographer’s B-roll files that we could possibly be used in the guidelines.

Kevin – Movi transmission short documentary film recently completed in BC may also be useful to link to Capture and Handling Guidelines

Pack Animals

Mike – on screen showed the latest version of “Brief on South American Camelid Disease Risk to Wild Sheep”

Committee meeting held September 2021

Helen and others just this week provided additional edits to this updated version

See document for guidance to land management agencies

Need pathogen profile on these animals

Ask to keep these animals separate from domestics back at home base.

Perhaps consider health passports for use on public lands?

Next step is a hopeful facilitated hybrid In-person/virtual forum with Pack Llama community leaders, wild sheep and land managers, animal and wildlife veterinarians,

Andy – did Wildlife Health Committee review?

Anne – some members have reviewed, looking to provide a clean copy for review. Wildlife Health Committee would like to put their stamp on it.

Mike - WSWG has never made an official statement on pack goats.

Kevin – with FS, BLM and others, what is their current thoughts and how they might use this information?

Mike - In the brief, it does describe some decisions that have been made by land management agencies.

Brian – We need to be objective and what is the best available science. Keep the language broad with all agencies, organizations, etc It’s a precautionary approach and keep that in mind as we move forward.

Mike – We all have slightly different views but need to work on further engagement with users.

Don – face forward and share with Llama and goat people.

Daryl – Think about how we all might engage with pack llama community to get their involvement and ownership in the decisions and processes involving use on public lands.

Kevin – Difference between hobby llama herds (that never go out on the mountain) and those herds are specifically used for trekking on public lands. Need to cover all uses. Clean copy would be good to start circulating around. Hope to have a forum this fall

Mike – Yes, hopefully have a meeting/forum this fall.

Holly – Was curious about next steps, clean copy would be helpful. Next step on #2 is a little different and would have to run through agency (#2 was have WSWG share their support for use of pack llamas in bighorn range if health inspection conducted by local vet and owner states the llamas have not been comingled with domestic sheep or goats).

Andy – We’ve been talking about this for a while. We all would be more comfortable with more disease testing. Is there a direct approach to getting more testing done?

Mike – SAC Users are sensitive to animal testing requests and argue that data already exists to show they are “clean” and have so far said NO to testing, so trying to engage in a different way.

Anne – to the point, it probably won’t happen for a few years. They feel pushed so we need to smooth the waters out a bit. Perhaps change language in document - to “consider allowing pack llama use in bighorn range IF the the following mitigation measures are taken.

Andy – If we had some data we could go strong but without it we will continue to be precautionary with their use in bighorn range!

Patrice – Item #2 is a concern. Health assessment alone doesn’t get at if animals are carriers; wording is important and lack of data is important

Kevin – Crawl before you walk before you run. A key issue - it’s about husbandry. Asked in Questionnaire to help us understand. We need to learn more about these animals!

Holly – This conversation helps with our wording and lack of knowledge, look forward to an updated version.

Don – We need some rigorous information to evaluate the real risk including industries, owners, etc...
Prediction is that hackles will be up when this gets started.

Mike – on screen – risk assessment from Mike Miller. What do I say at the Director’s meeting? Give me some help on my ask to them? Need to ask leadership.

Amber? – Has that conversation happened previously?

Mike – No

Amber? – then it should happen now.

Anne? – perhaps ask for funding for research

Patrice – do we have connections to US Animal Health Association?

Anne? – Good thought to pursue

Holly – What to take to the Directors?

Mike – Simple and direct and ask for direction

Andy – first experimentally, Step 2, if they get disease are they in contact with others.

Don – may get a lot of push back.

Kevin – OSU would be a good source and contact, funding discussions for this within WSF and other possible agencies

Brian – expect resistance to precautionary restrictions

WSWG Chair position

Mike – there have only been rumors but currently no new WSWG chair has been selected. Directors have been talking with a few candidates. Daryl Lutz is considering the position. Mike wanting to step down but still complete Capture guidelines.

Daryl – offered up just as an interim, short term basis

Kevin - Position is still available. No announcement to be made but does it get shared with Daryl for a short term.

Mike – Directors haven’t taken the steps

Daryl – Do with my current job I have, but just short-term solution.

Holly – Wondering what other ideas were put forth to Directors?

Mike – Brents idea of rotating around states. Was hoping to give them a candidate to consider but haven’t had one.

Kevin – agency assessments of \$3k, is there agency fatigue.

Daryl – Promises not to do too good of a job so the assessment is still needed! 😊

Mike – paid Vern some for Capture and Handling Guidelines work, spent some of the funds for Risk of Contact work but probably \$40k still in the account on top of adequate funds to pay half salary for next full year of new chair.

Thanks to everyone as he steps down from Chair position

Thanks to Mike from all!!!!

WSF Summit – ran out of time

Froylan – DBC meeting - April 11 – 14 2023 in Alpine, TX . Social Tuesday night, Talks Wed & Thurs, Field Trip on Friday