

Bighorn Updates

January 2007

Herd Count - 2006

Winter count Feb - 168

- 31 young-of-year, 1 yearling, 91 ewes, 42 rams

Summer count July - 39

- low due to movement to higher elevations

Fall count November - 139

- 31 young-of-year, 7 yearlings, 56 ewes, 39 males
- Numbers vary due to the large range of the local band.



Past Herd Counts

Since 1990 the highest herd count has been **213** in 2003

Collars – Fashion with function

Collaring of sheep allows researchers to locate sheep throughout the area. As well many observations can be made with regards to their lambing practices and overall range.

Eleven sheep were collared in early 2006

- 8 ewes and 3 rams.
- In November these collars were removed by a remote release mechanism.
- 2 ewes, remained collared for further research purposes.
- Refurbished collars arrived and a new group of sheep will be sporting these fashionable collars again in February



Lamb Observations

- 4 of 7 collared females had lambs which survived
- Lambs are usually born during late spring or early summer generally on a south or south-west aspect
- Radium-Stoddart herd Lambing sites are generally in the southern Brisco range.



One ewe travelled to the northern end of the Brisco range to have her lamb, climbing 50 kms in a straight line, further than a previous record holder from 2002!

Sheep Respond to Restoration Area

The 172 ha Redstreak Restoration area gets the highest use between April and June with Rams generally using it more than ewes. Use increased from 2002 to 2004 with a decline in the past couple years, due to herd fluctuations, weather variation etc. Continued monitoring will be necessary in order to establish and understand a long-term use by the bighorn herd.

Bighorns are usually very slow colonizers of new habitat (Geist 1971). Restoration work began in 2002 with brushing, piling, burning, non-native plant control, and limited planting of native grass plugs.



Mortality – highways and railways

11 of 16 sheep mortalities in 2006 can be attributed to highway or railways

Drive slow and watch for wildlife!

Fun Facts

Bighorns are grazers, and generally eat grasses, sedges and flowering plants. They prefer steep, south and south-west aspects, as the snow melts faster here and they have better access to food. A preference for this open habitat, along with their excellent vision, allows them to avoid predators like cougars.



Migration occurs in the winter (October through April) with the Radium-Stoddart Herd in and around Radium Village. Females begin spring migration routes for lambing in May, climbing up to the Brisco range. Males begin their migration in late May, climbing higher and travelling farther into the Brisco and Stanford ranges than the females. By September, the ewes begin returning down to Radium with their lambs. Males begin returning a month later, in October.

Kootenay National Park is BC's only national park that contains grassland, which is a provincially threatened ecosystem.



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