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IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME SALMON REGION

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact Bonnie Jakubos at 756-2271

Bighorn sheep euthanized after contacting domestic goats

By Tom Keegan, Regional Wildlife Manager

SALMON-

- A 1-year old bighorn sheep ram that mingled with domestic goats was euthanized Monday to prevent the sheep from potentially carrying disease back to the wild herd.
- Tom Keegan, Salmon Regional Wildlife Manager for IDFG, humanely euthanized the year-old ram Monday after capturing the animal Friday evening. The bighorn sheep was removed from a pasture containing several hundred domestic goats south of Salmon airport. Because bighorn sheep are susceptible to diseases that can be carried by domestic sheep and goats, the Idaho Fish and Game policy is to remove bighorns when they come in contact with domestic herds. Attempts to find a research or zoo facility that would accept the young ram were unsuccessful.
- A landowner contacted regional wildlife staff Friday evening to report that a young bighorn ram was in a pasture with several hundred domestic goats. Biologists responded and drugged the animal using a dart projector.
- Domestic sheep and goats often carry a number of bacteria and viruses to which wild sheep may be susceptible, which can then result in fatal pneumonia in wild sheep. The greatest risk occurs when a wild sheep mixes with domestic sheep or goats and then returns to a wild herd, potentially spreading the bacteria or viruses to other wild sheep. In some cases, this scenario can result in large-scale die-offs in wild sheep. "In a few cases, entire wild sheep herds have died. More often we see 50-70% losses, followed by several years of low lamb survival" said Keegan.
- Dr. Mark Drew, a wildlife veterinarian with IDFG, contacted a research facility and several municipal zoos in Idaho and neighboring states to find a home for the young ram, but none of

the facilities had room for the animal at this time. “It’s heartbreaking to have to euthanize a bighorn sheep,” Keegan noted, “but the risk to wild populations is huge, so it’s definitely the lesser of two evils.”

- Keegan thanked the landowner for the timely report. In order for biologists to respond quickly and protect wild sheep, it is very important for people to immediately report interactions between wild bighorns and domestic sheep or goats. If you see bighorn sheep mixing with domestic sheep or goats, please contact the Salmon Region Fish and Game office, 756-2271, during business hours. After hours, you can call the local sheriff’s office and ask them to relay the information to IDFG.