

Health and Behaviour of BC's Southern Most Stone's Sheep

Newsletter #5

April 2023



A lamb and three ewes visiting a mineral lick in the summer. Trail cameras set up at known mineral licks help us document lick use, particularly by uncollared sheep.



Wolf tracks found at the mortality site of S004D, a collared Dunlevy ewe that died in Nov 2022 while migrating to her winter range on 20 Mile Point.



The cliff that S015D fell of, with the red circle marking her location.

Ewe S015D found dead under a tree below a cliff. This ewe migrated away from her normal low elevation winter range in January back to Aylard Ridge and died just a few weeks later. Upon investigation, we found her neck broken, likely due to a fall from the cliff above.



Three ewes hiding under some trees during an aerial survey.



And a few more ewes hiding in the thick timber



A ewe captured this year for health sampling with significant hair barbering — a sign of irritation due to external parasites. A closer examination of this ewe revealed scabs along the sides and the belly, likely caused by ticks.



Compared to the Dunlevy ewe on the left, the coat on this Schooler ewe captured last year is in great shape, with no hair barbering.

Sheep in the Dunlevy are notoriously hard to count due to their preference for timbered areas throughout the year, wintering at elevations as low as 700m. During our fall survey in the Dunlevy, we counted a record high of 58 sheep, though it's highly likely we missed several small bands of sheep hiding in the timber.

While hairloss on ewes on low elevation winter ranges in the Dunlevy has been common, we have seen no significant evidence to indicate it has impacted adult survival or reproduction.

Did you know?

Mountain sheep have horizontal pupils, giving them a panoramic-like view that helps with predator detection.

What's Next?

In early late June/July we'll be conducting our annual ground-based lambing survey. During this survey, teams hike the Dunlevy summer ranges recording all sheep observations to document neonatal survival.



For any additional information, please contact Robin Routledge, robin.wssbc@gmail.com.



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