

From: [Brett Barringer](#)
To: [Miller, Shannon D \(DEC\)](#); info@akwildsheep.org
Subject: DEC M. ovi Comment Period
Date: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 10:21:59 PM

October 6, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing you with regard to M. ovi and protecting Alaska's wild sheep, goats, and muskox. These species face grave risks from M. ovi and must be protected from further exposure to M. ovi. M. ovi is a chronic lethal plague to the wild bighorn sheep of the Western United States. This is true even with the highly fragmented population distributions of bighorns, which makes mass transmission harder. Alaska has robust sheep populations that are connected through large and contiguous mountain ranges. This interconnectedness would allow for even a single focal transmission to burn through an entire mountain range or even ranges unlike the Western United States. Dall sheep at the Toronto Zoo died when they were exposed to M. ovi, so we know it can be lethal for Dall sheep. Because of these factors, M. ovi poses a unique and terrible threat to Alaska's wild sheep, goats, and muskox.

I am aware that M. ovi is present in Alaska, but I'm also aware there are many strains of M. ovi. The strain currently here, fortunately does not appear to be very virulent. Some strains are very virulent and highly lethal for generations of wild animals after initial exposure. It is incumbent upon the Department of Environmental Conservation to take appropriate steps to mitigate that risk. Unlike most Western states, Alaska has a small population of domestic livestock who have the potential to carry and transmit M. ovi to wild animals. Because of this small population, mandatory testing is a reasonable and feasible solution for preventing the spread of other strains of M. ovi to Alaska's wild animals. I find this to be especially reasonable when NGOs are willing to foot the bill for testing and to compensate farmers for any animals that test positive. Please take the steps necessary to protect Alaska's wild sheep, goats, and muskox. Our wild sheep, goats, and muskox are resources of incalculable value. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

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