

Kanika Koruna

Dear Department of Environmental Conservation,

I am writing in opposition to the Proposed Revisions to Animal Care, Animal Importation, and Disease Control (18 AAC 36) that would require testing *M. Ovipneumoniae* (M. Ovi) for imported sheep and goats.

Goat and sheep owners are under attack and have been defending the freedom to own such animals for the last several years. I am puzzled as to why. There is no evidence that privately owned animals in Alaska have ever passed M. Ovi to wild animals. Additionally it has been demonstrated that M. Ovi occurs naturally within the wild stocks. Why then is there a repeated attack? I suspect it has to do with wealthy hunting groups and their political influence on State regulations. These proposed revisions appear to be another tactic to punish families and farmers based on the unsubstantiated fears of wealthy special interest hunting groups.

Some of my children have cow milk allergies but can drink goat milk. Some also have allergies to beef, chicken, turkey, but not goat nor sheep meat. My family acquired animals to provide an allergen-free source of food. I am not independently wealthy and these animals have provided a stable and affordable means of providing quality food to my family. These revisions would move to undermine the food security of my children and cause an economic burden to my family. We recently acquired new animals to replace deceased animals. New genetics is necessary to avoid inbreeding and the negative effects inbreeding causes. Animals are expensive enough and these regulations would possibly add hundreds of dollars more to the cost and additional red tape.

Alaska's domestic sheep and goat population does not free range on public lands where contact with wild sheep could potentially occur. Domestic sheep and goats are generally located many miles from wild sheep populations. My goats and sheep are confined to pens and barns and not allowed to free range.

There has not been a single case documented of disease transmission from domestic sheep or goats to wild sheep in Alaska. Even in the Lower 48, it has not been proven that domestic sheep and goats were the cause of die-offs due to disease in the wild sheep population. Wild sheep have been proven to be carriers of M. Ovi, and not from domesticated animals. Without proof, or even a credible threat, why should additional regulations be created for domesticated animals?

In this post-Covid world, the State should be streamlining food security for our state and not seek to burden struggling farmers and families with additional regulation and costs. We all should be able to raise food on our private land for our families without burdensome regulations from non-existent and undocumented threats.

Can the State please stop pandering to the fear-mongering of wealthy special interest hunting groups? My children would appreciate it.

Therefore, I respectfully request the Department of Environmental Conservation NOT to enact the proposed revisions.

Thank you,
Kanika Koruna