

Regional Biologist Brief on:  
The Impact of Repeat Harvesters of Sheep and LEH Sheep Hunter Concerns

Ministry of FLNRORD Regional Wildlife Biologists have reached out to the Wild Sheep Society of BC to provide insight into sheep harvest and harvesters. They wanted to provide a summary to our membership in hopes that they can reduce the annual repetition of these requests and to dispel some folklore type myths.

**1. Concern - the impact of repeat harvesters of sheep:**

Skeena:

The actual number of successful sheep hunters in Skeena region, who were successful in back-to-back years; successful in 2 of 3 years; or even 2 in 5 years, is very low:

- Over a 6 year period from 2010 to 2015 (inclusive) there were 675 rams harvested & CI'd in Skeena by Resident (RH), Non-Resident (NRH) & First Nation (FN) hunters.
- During that same time and from that same pool, there were 332 RH & 10 FN hunters who were successful = 342 'RH' hunters.
- Of those 342 hunters, 23 HUNTERS took rams in back-to-back years (23/342=7%); these plus an additional 7 HUNTERS took 2 rams over 3 years (30/342=9%); there were no hunters who took more than 2 sheep in this period, or who did not take the second sheep within a 3 year period (i.e., the same 30 hunters took 2 rams over 5 years, as was identified in the 3 year calculation).

So considering this, implementing a limit that allows taking only 1 ram in 3 years in Skeena, would potentially only mean reducing the 3-5 year harvest by about 15 rams (i.e.,  $30/2=15$  rams, because under the 1 in 3 proposal they can still take 1 ram in that 3 year period), dispelling the myth that a 1 in 3 rule would reduce ram harvest to any larger degree (e.g.,  $675 - 15 = 660$  rams or a 2% reduction in overall harvest).

Peace:

- In the past seven seasons, there has been 701 successful resident Stone's sheep hunters in Region 7B.
- Of those 701 successful hunters, 50 have killed rams on back to back years in the past seven seasons (7%).

If a "one ram in two years" rule was implemented, this would result in an average of 7 fewer rams killed by residents each year.

- Of the 701 successful resident sheep hunters, only 82 have killed two rams in three years over the past seven seasons (12%).

If a "one ram in three years" rule was implemented, this would result in an average of 12 fewer rams killed by residents each year.

- Seven of 701 (1%) successful resident sheep hunters have killed more than one ram less than 8-years old in the past seven seasons.
- One of 50 (2%) successful resident sheep hunters that killed rams in back-to-back years, killed two rams under 8-years old.
- One of 82 (~1%) successful resident sheep hunters that killed rams in two out of three years, killed two rams under 8-years old.

This really dispels the myth of repeat offender hunters killing young rams 'every' year.

## 2. Concern - LEH holders overharvest through repeat take, or do not use their LEHs:

Another bit of a red herring is the notion that LEH holders do not use their LEH, but instead harvest a sheep in a GOS area. Provincially, over a 10 year period (2007-2016) inclusive of all sheep LEH hunters and all species of sheep:

- During the period from 2007-2016, approximately 9% of KILLS by hunters holding a valid LEH, actually occurred outside the hunter's issued LEH MU/zone;
- Of the 483 KILLS by HUNTERS holding an LEH (using data corrected for location):
  - 440 sheep were KILLED under the LEH, by 421 HUNTERS (i.e., harvest was in the LEH zone and during the LEH timing period between 2007-2016), and
  - 43 sheep were KILLED by 42 HUNTERS but not harvested in their LEH zone, or not during the LEH timing (between 2007-2016);
- The number of KILLS by hunters with repeat kills in two or more years who drew an LEH (i.e., kill may or may not be in the LEH area) = 43;
- The number of HUNTERS with repeat kills in two or more years who drew an LEH (kill may or may not be in LEH area) = 20, or 4.3% of the total number of 463 successful LEH hunters;
- The number of KILLS by LEH Hunters with repeated success & harvest in same area as their LEH (kill in LEH area but harvest may be from 2 or more LEH areas in different years) = 36, or 8.2% of the total number of 440 kills;
- The number of LEH HUNTERS with repeated success & harvest in same area as their LEH (i.e., 2 to 3 successful hunt years, but may include harvest from different LEH areas through time) = 15, or 3.6% of the total number of 420 hunters;
- The number of KILLS by successful repeat LEH hunters who hunted in the same LEH area, in multiple years and were successful in that same area in multiple years = 32, or 7.3% of the total number of 440 LEH kills that occurred in the LEH area and during the LEH timing;
- The number of LEH HUNTERS with repeated success & harvest but in different LEH areas, over multiple years (i.e., killed different subspecies) = 11, or 55% of the total number of 20 successful repeat LEH hunters;
- The number of LEH HUNTERS with repeated success & harvest but in the same LEH area, over multiple years (i.e., killed same subspecies) = 9, or 45% of the total number of 20 successful repeat LEH hunters.