
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource
Operations

Moose Winter Tick Surveillance Program needs your help

VICTORIA – Members of the public are being asked to help document moose winter tick infestations by completing and submitting an online Moose Winter Tick Survey before April 30, 2016.

The survey will help B.C.'s wildlife health staff monitor the number of moose affected with these ticks and the extent to which they affect moose around the province.

The Moose Winter Tick Surveillance Program monitors the number of animals with hair loss and the amount of hair loss on each animal to estimate winter tick prevalence and distribution. Tick infestations can sometimes result in severe behavioural and physiological changes and directly impact the survival rates of moose – especially young animals. The survey's findings will help to inform moose management in British Columbia.

Winter ticks (*Dermacentor albipictus*) can have a significant impact on moose populations when climate and habitat conditions promote high tick numbers. This type of tick goes through three life stages over the winter on one moose and there can be as many as tens of thousands on one animal. As the ticks mature, they feed on the animal's blood and can cause anaemia. In late winter, the irritation from ticks causes moose to scratch and groom themselves excessively, resulting in hair loss and less time spent foraging.

The extent of hair loss on a moose can be observed easily from a distance and is a rough indicator of how many ticks are present. Survey participants are asked to observe the amount of hair loss, if any, occurring on moose and check the survey box which most describes the animal – ranging from “no loss” to “ghost” which means hair loss over most of the body or 80% of winter hair.

Winter tick infestations are generally observed on moose from February through April. Anyone interested in contributing to the surveillance program can obtain a copy of the survey online at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/download/6AAE0D9D88A34A7EBD487DC4FED75E18> or by contacting Dustin Walsh at: FLNRMooseTickSurvey@gov.bc.ca or 250 617-0725.

A copy of the 2015 Provincial Moose Winter Tick Surveillance Program Report is available at: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/download/382F60531B704DDD942322AE08488B1>

Quick Facts:

- In 2014, British Columbia's moose population was estimated at 120,000 to 205,000, with an average range of 162,500.
- The goal for moose management, as defined by the *Provincial Framework for Moose Management in British Columbia* is to ensure moose populations are sustainable, integral

to natural ecosystems throughout their range, and able to meet the needs for First Nations, licensed hunters and the guiding industry.

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