



Bighorn Sheep Hunters -We need your Help!

We need your help to collect information on a health issue of wild sheep in the Similkameen Valley of southern British Columbia. The condition is known as **Psoroptic mange** or **Psoroptes infestation**. We are currently researching this disease in the valley but at that this time there is still little known about the disease in BC.

What is it?

Mange is a general term for a skin disease caused by tiny mites. One type called *Psoroptes* ("sore-op-tees") live in the ears and on the bodies of a variety of animals including bighorn sheep. They cause Psoroptic mange but can be present on animals without any apparent signs. *Psoroptes* mites are in a number of US bighorn populations but have never been seen as a health issue in Canadian bighorns.

Severe generalized mange was confirmed in a bighorn ram near Keremeos, BC in February 2011 (photo on right). The ram was euthanized for humane reasons and the mites were identified.

Does it Kill the Animals?

The infestation itself does not kill the animals directly and mildly infested animals may show little sign of disease. Some individuals are severely affected, such as the ram pictured. The hair loss and time spent scratching and chewing at their irritated skin instead of feeding may weaken them and make them more susceptible to other health issues.

How Widespread is it in BC?

Reports of bighorns with "funny" or "cardboard looking ears" suggests that *Psoroptes* has been present in Similkameen bighorns, at least since 2009. More recent surveys have confirmed the disease is present across the Similkameen Valley (MU 803, 802, 807) and the west side of the Okanagan Valley (MU 801 and 808). So far the disease has not been observed in bighorn on the east side of the Okanagan Valley. Just south of the border *Psoroptes* has been confirmed in Palmer Lake, Washington (~15 km south of the border). This population is connected to the Similkameen bighorn.



Bighorn ram with an advanced *Psoroptes* infestation was euthanized in February, 2011 near Olalla BC.



We are working with other wildlife health professionals in Canada, the US and elsewhere to understand this disease and will continue to monitor and discuss options as we learn more. At this time we are evaluating management actions as part of a research project.

How do you know an animal has it?

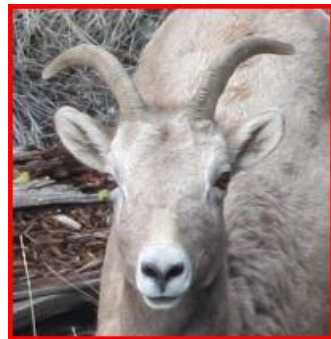
Most bighorns with these mites will have crusty or waxy material in their ears, resulting in strangely positioned, crusty or hairless ears. Pictures **a.** and **b.** below are examples of bighorn with signs of infection in their ears. Picture **c.** shows ears of a healthy bighorn.



a.



b.



c.

What Can You Do To Help?

You can help by submitting information about bighorns that you observe during your hunt. We are interested in:

What you saw: ANY signs of <i>Psoroptes</i> (e.g. hairless or crusty ears; scabs on the hide).	How many animals were affected?	Where were they? locations of infested bighorns (e.g. Management Unit, nearest Creek or UTM/Lat. Long)

Your information will help us better understand the distribution of this disease and what to do about it. Please send your observations to:

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