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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a packgoat enthusiast I rely on my animals to get me into the back-country. As I get older, it becomes a bit more difficult to do what I did in my younger years, hence the assistance of my four-legged friends. I have trained my goats from a few days old. They get premium feed and regular vet visits and necessary vaccinations annually. We are very bonded and they easily follow me wherever I go. Please keep the Nez Perce-Clearwater NF open for packgoat use.

An excerpt from the summary of understanding by Dr. Maggie Highland's 2016 M.ovi study follows:

To consider packgoats the same as sheep for purposes of analyzing the risk of disease (pathogen) transmission to bighorn sheep is in error. Packgoat owners train packgoat prospects from a young age. Packgoats are inextricably bonded to their owner, which represents the "alpha goat" in their small herd. The lifestyle and care of a packgoat in herds of 2 to 10 differs greatly from that of a typical herd of domestic sheep or goats which can range in size of hundreds to thousands. Packgoats are seen by their owners as a significant investment in time and resources for 3 or 4 years before they are viable for packing purposes. Throughout a packgoat's life, the packgoat receives routine veterinary care in order to keep the goat healthy and prolong their useful life.

Available literature at the time of this 2015 meeting quoted decades-old science in its discussion of evidence for "disease transmission" from domestic goats to BHS. There was no, and to date remains no, scientific support to implicate packgoats in BHS die-offs. Goats and sheep are different species and the scientific data from captive commingling experiments concerning pathogen (*M. ovipneumoniae* or other historically examined pathogens, such as members of the Pasteurellaceae family of bacteria) transmission to bighorn sheep and subsequent disease is vastly different. The types of *M. ovipneumoniae* carried by domestic sheep differ genetically from those carried by domestic goats (Maksimovic, Cassirer, unpublished data). Goat types or "strains" of *M. ovipneumoniae* have resulted in relatively mild (non-fatal) respiratory illness, dramatically different than the nearly 100% fatality reported from captive commingling with domestic sheep. To group sheep and goats together, and even packgoats and other types of domestic goats, in the discussion of pathogen or disease transmission falsely implicates packgoats in BHS die-off's.

In more recent research by Besser et al. (2016), not a single domestic goat or bighorn sheep succumbed to any sort of pneumonia before or after being infected with a "goat type" of *M. ovipneumoniae* and not a single animal died as a result of disease during the study. Domestic goats were not shown to cause deaths of bighorn sheep as a result of pathogen ("disease") transmission, even when the 3 study goats, were inoculated/infected with a "goat type" of *M. ovipneumoniae* and forced to commingle with bighorn sheep for 100 days. All animals in the study, both the domestic goats and bighorn sheep began showing symptoms of respiratory illness, and all of them recovered prior to being euthanized by the researchers.