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Comments: Pack Goats again:

Thanks for your hard work on the draft plan and also considering our needs and wants. I sense in the plan that pack goats and domestic sheep may be lumped into the same risk stratification and management. The risks between the two on Big Horn Sheep are vastly different. There are ample studies demonstrating both the transmission of pathogens and the lethal nature of those pathogens such pneumonia to BHS. This is not the case with goats. The few studies completed have demonstrated (despite some of the biased conclusions) both inconclusive transmission and low levels of mortality. The controlled studies have demonstrated low mortality of goats pastured with BHS and low to no transmission of pneumonia. The other published literature are probable but not always substantiated incidents of goats and BHS interactions in natural environments; I've argued before are not very compelling and certainly should not form a foundation for policy making. Thus domestic sheep risk stratification should not be combined with risk goats pose on BHS.

Furthermore risks of disease transmission of goats in large herds should not commensurate with pack goats. Based on a Washington State University unpublished study revealed pack goat herds tested for less disease than dairy herds in the same area. Numbers are especially important to consider in risk for interaction between domestic animals and BHS. Consider for example goats for weed control and domestic sheep for grazing number from 50-500 watched over by one herder (sometimes present sometimes not) and a hand full of sheep/guard dogs. Furthermore, they are in the forest for a number weeks to number of consecutive months. Pack goat number from 2-12 with a ratio of 2-4 goats per person and normally in the forest for 1-7 days. That is a night and day contrast between domestic sheep/goats and pack goats when consider numbers and time in the forest alone.

I know this has been repetitively mentioned but I can't help myself, pack goats do not wonder away from human contact. Even when spooked they do not go far and are easy to find. I only loose mine when they follow another person away and I have to call them back. They do not follow after deer, horses, llamas or any other animals; they consider themselves humans base on how they are uniquely trained as pack goats. I've had now 8 years of packing with goats in this forest as I live and work in Montrose, CO and have had unintentional contact with BHS on several occasions. My goats had no more interest in BHS than they do deer (which is a 30 second look over) and the BHS ran like I was wolf pack as we approached at no closer than a half a mile. Most circumstances the sheep ran before we noticed their presence. This may not always be the case where BHS (such as a recent experience at the Royal Gorge) are used human presence but again the control we have over our goats is similar to a leashed dog, no chance they will run off and interact with a BHS and very unlikely with human presence next to our goats that a BHS will come within disease transmission distance.

Thanks again for listening to the public.