



Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Project

October 22 – November 4, 2015

BRIEFING

The following is a summary of bighorn sheep reintroduction activities on the Coronado National Forest from October 22 – November 4, 2015.

UPCOMING RELEASE

The Department is moving forward with a third release of bighorn sheep later this month. There are robust populations of sheep at or near Yuma Proving Grounds and in the Plomosa Mountains near Yuma, and the Department plans to capture 30 sheep from these areas for release into the Catalina Mountains. While a variety of diseases are common in bighorn sheep populations in Arizona, the confirmed mortalities of four sheep in the Catalinas from pneumonia have caused concern over the pathogen *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*. Bloodwork on bighorn sheep from the Yuma region has shown that these animals had recent exposure to *Mycoplasma*, and thus have some ability to resist infection by this pathogen, which reduces concern for pneumonia.

RESEARCH BRANCH UPDATE

Department researchers observed 32 of 35 collared animals in October. Field observations on group composition indicated an overall lamb:ewe ratio of 37 lambs per 100 ewes. Bighorn sheep were observed feeding on a variety of cacti. A group of ewes was observed knocking over a leaning barrel cactus, while others were observed eating chain-fruit cholla. The rams continued to show rutting behavior. Lambs appeared healthy, and several were observed sparring with their new horns. It is possible that an additional lamb survived to yearling age in 2014. Researchers had a lengthy observation of a young ram, and based upon his size, believe he is a yearling rather than a large lamb.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

As of November 4, 2015, 35 collared sheep are known to be alive.

LINKS

For project background and previously-reported information on project events, including photos and videos, as well as meeting notes and minutes please visit www.azgfd.gov and click on “Wildlife”, then “Catalina Bighorn Sheep” under the heading “Additional Wildlife Information”.

Additional project information can be obtained by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CatalinaBighorns, the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society

webpage at www.adbss.org, or by visiting the Catalina Bighorn Advisory Committee webpage at www.catalinabighornrestoration.org. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose.

TO SUBSCRIBE

If you would like to receive project updates as they are published please send your email address to ldesouza@azgfd.gov.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

The next written briefing will be provided on November 20, 2015.

CONTACT

Mark Hart is the Public Information Officer for this project and can be reached at (520) 628-5376.