

PSOROPTIC MANGE: AN EMERGING DISEASE OF BIGHORN SHEEP IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Abstract: Psoroptic mange is a highly contagious disease of domestic and wild sheep and is caused by the non-burrowing ectoparasitic mite *Psoroptes ovis*. Clinical signs are variable and range from droopy and thinly haired ears to a more generalized skin disease that is characterized by intense itchiness with secondary lesions such as extensive hair loss and ulceration and crusting of the skin. In the past, outbreaks of psoroptic mange have been associated with significant declines in bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) populations.

In February 2011 a ram was diagnosed with psoroptic mange in Ollala, British Columbia. Subsequently, aerial surveillance of the Ashnola / Similkameen bighorn population revealed that the mite was widespread in the Similkameen valley, affecting approximately 17% of bighorn sheep observed. Enhanced surveillance is needed to gain a better understanding of the prevalence and geographical distribution of *P. ovis* in bighorn sheep in BC, and to evaluate the risk of transmission to neighbouring populations and domestic sheep.

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