

**INTERIM STRATEGY
FOR MANAGING SEPARATION BETWEEN
BIGHORN SHEEP AND DOMESTIC SHEEP
IN IDAHO**

Introduction

In November 2007, Governor C. L. “Butch” Otter directed the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (“IDFG”) and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (“ISDA”) to assemble and co-chair a working group to assist the state in the developing a state-wide strategy for managing the interaction between bighorn sheep herds and domestic sheep on state and federal lands in Idaho. Specifically, the working group was directed to provide recommendations for managing separation of bighorn and domestic sheep. The state’s Interim Strategy for Managing Separation Between Bighorn Sheep and Domestic Sheep in Idaho (“Interim Strategy”) is to be completed by February 15, 2008 and to be implemented, where possible, prior to scheduled domestic sheep turnout dates for 2008.

The Interim Strategy was written by the IDFG with consultation from the ISDA. The working group’s role was advisory and they provided comment on drafts of the strategy for adoption and implementation pursuant to IDFG’s statutory mandate to manage wildlife, including bighorn sheep, in Idaho. The working group further understands the constraints of state and federal laws and various Tribal Treaty requirements. Elements of the Interim Strategy were based on recommendations of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep.

The Interim Strategy provides some immediate management options that can be used on the allotment level to promote separation of bighorn and domestic sheep. Permittees, land management agency, and state employees will work together this spring to design domestic sheep herd plans and response plans that reduce the likelihood of intermingling of wild and domestic sheep. The working group will continue to pursue a long term Statewide Policy that addresses separation of bighorn and domestic sheep in Idaho.

Recitals

Whereas, bighorn sheep are native to Idaho and have been restored to some historic habitat in partnership with federal land management agencies, other state agencies and private organizations;

Whereas, bighorn sheep are historically, culturally and economically valuable to the citizens of the State of Idaho and Tribes;

Whereas, the domestic sheep industry is historically, culturally and economically valuable to the citizens of the State of Idaho;

Whereas, it is in the public interest to maintain and restore bighorn populations, where appropriate;

Whereas, it is in the public interest to maintain and restore access to state and federal land for grazing by domestic sheep, where appropriate;

Now therefore, it shall be the interim strategy of the State of Idaho to manage bighorn sheep and domestic sheep to ensure physical separation between bighorn and domestic sheep according to the following provisions:

1. Protocols related to the temporal and spatial management of bighorn sheep range and domestic sheep allotments shall be considered and implemented, where appropriate, in developing a domestic and bighorn sheep management plan at the allotment level:
 - a. Bighorn sheep populations on state and federal lands shall be identified and mapped by IDFG, and potential conflict areas identified in coordination with ISDA, and with state and federal land management agencies with respect to current grazing allotment areas. Initial mapping shall be completed by March 1, 2008.
 - b. Potential conflict between bighorn sheep populations and domestic sheep shall be managed by IDFG, in coordination with the ISDA, affected state or federal land management agencies, and permittee(s) to achieve physical separation during the season of use of the grazing allotment. Methods used will include:
 - i. Identification and definition of buffer zones between occupied bighorn sheep habitat and grazing allotments;
 - ii. Buffer zones will be determined on a case-by-case basis, with the size and configuration developed by taking into consideration bighorn sheep habitat, natural barriers to movement by bighorn sheep or domestic sheep, existing and proposed artificial barriers, and domestic sheep herding practices;
 - iii. State and federal land management agencies will be encouraged to work with IDFG and ISDA, in cooperation with the permittee(s), to explore alternate allotments to achieve physical separation and adjust season of use in pastures/allotments to improve separation of the species.
2. The following protocols related to the management of bighorn sheep populations shall be considered and implemented, where appropriate, in developing a domestic and bighorn sheep management plan at the allotment level.
 - a. IDFG, in coordination with ISDA and with input from state or federal land management agencies and permittee(s) shall develop a procedure, on a case-by-case basis, for the removal of bighorn sheep straying into defined buffer

zones. Actions may include hazing, capture, or lethal removal of bighorn sheep.

- b. Bighorn sheep that stray into and inter-mingle with domestic sheep shall be removed according to a response protocol developed by IDFG, in coordination with ISDA and with input from state or federal land management agencies and permittee(s).
 - c. Bighorn sheep will be managed to minimize population expansion into existing domestic sheep allotments.
 - d. Bighorn sheep will not be transplanted into areas where there is a risk that effective separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep cannot be achieved.
3. The following protocols related to the management of domestic sheep while grazing on state or federal allotments shall be considered and implemented, where appropriate, in developing a domestic and bighorn sheep management plan at the allotment level.
- a. ISDA and IDFG, with the agreement of the permittee, shall develop a procedure to be used on a case-by-case basis for the removal of domestic sheep straying into defined buffer zones. Input may be provided, on a voluntary basis, by affected federal land management agencies. Actions may include capture or lethal removal of domestic sheep.
 - b. Feral, abandoned, or wandering domestic sheep whose an owner cannot be identified shall be removed according to a response protocol developed by ISDA and IDFG. Input may be provided, on a voluntary basis, by affected federal land management agencies and the permittee(s).
 - c. ISDA and IDFG, with agreement of the affected permittee(s) shall develop a procedure, on a case-by-case basis, that will minimize straying of domestic sheep. Strategies may include, but are not limited to, employing additional herders and dogs or other guard animals trained to chase away animal intrusion into the band.
 - d. ISDA and IDFG, with the agreement of the permittee and input from the affected state or federal land management agencies shall develop a procedure, on a case-by-case basis, for reporting and removing sick domestic sheep on grazing allotments.