2026 Thinhorn Sheep Survey: Donjek Sheep Management Unit

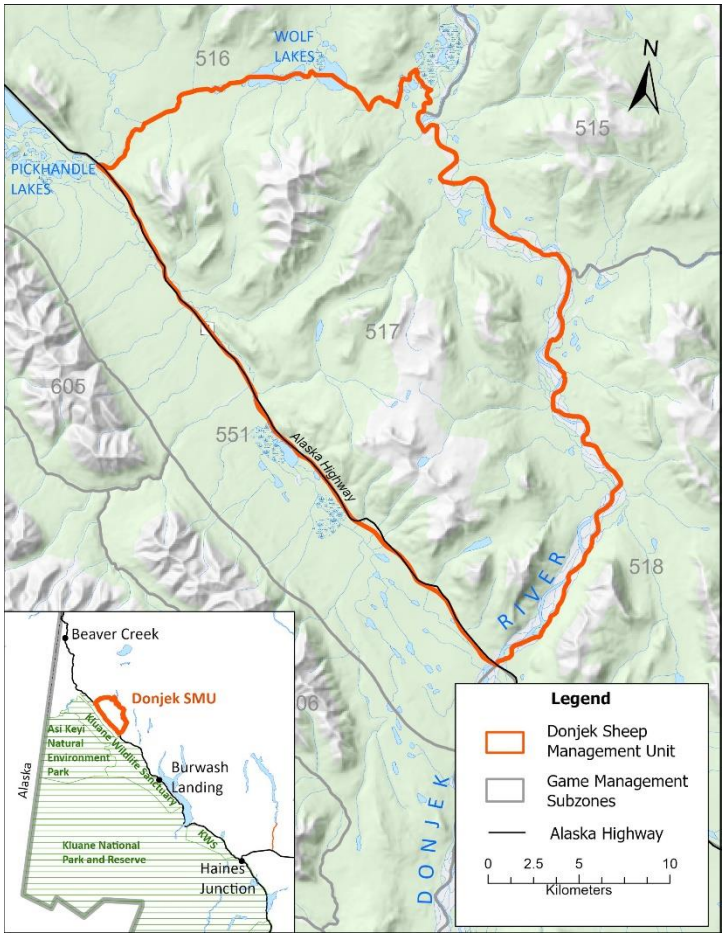


Figure 1. Map of the Donjek Sheep Management Unit surveyed in July 2026 in the Kluane region, Yukon.

In early July 2026, a minimum count aerial survey of thinhorn sheep was flown in the Donjek Sheep Management Unit (SMU) in the Kluane region. The survey provided a minimum count of thinhorn sheep, evaluated distribution and estimated lamb recruitment and adult sex ratios. These measures, when monitored over time, are indicators of sub-population trends.

Summary of results

Date: July 3, 2026

Hours flown: 3

Minimum counts (non lamb): 38

Lamb: Nursery: 41:100

Ram: Nursery: 41:100



Results

We observed 38 non-lamb sheep in July 2026. In comparison to the previous survey completed in 2023, the non-lamb count increased by 8 (27%).

Over time, an average lamb recruitment of 25 lambs per 100 nursery sheep is considered necessary for a stable population. The recruitment rate for the Donjek SMU was above the level in 2026 and 2023 suggesting a healthy lamb recruitment for both years.

In 2026, the Donjek SMU had a relatively low sex ratio of 41 rams per 100 nursery sheep.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
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Previous surveys

Minimum aerial count surveys have been conducted periodically in the Yukon since 1973. These counts, when monitored over time, are indicators of sub-population trends. Yukon thinhorn sheep sub-populations have historically experienced fluctuations in numbers.

In the Donjek SMU, the first survey was completed in 1974 and counted 24 non-lamb sheep. The highest number of non-lamb sheep observed in the Donjek SMU was in 2015 with 83 non-lamb sheep counted. In 2023, the number of non-lamb sheep was 30 which represents a 63% decrease compared to the 2015 survey.

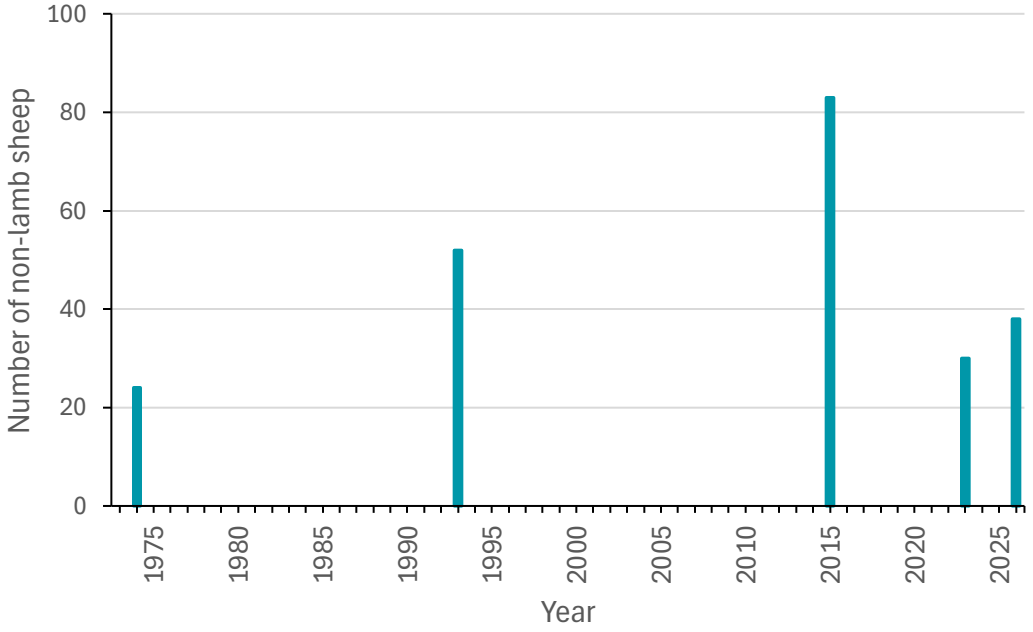


Figure 2. Non-lamb count for the Donjek Sheep Management Unit from 1973 to 2026.

Management considerations

Thinhorn sheep in the Kluane region have recently experienced serious declines. In response to a population decline from 2015 to 2023 in the Donjek SMU (Figure 2), the Government of Yukon issued a 2-year sheep hunting closure for this SMU beginning in 2024.

An increase in the non-lamb count in 2026 and healthy recruitment observed in 2023 and 2026 are positive signs for the Donjek sheep population. However, the population is still small with few mature rams. Future surveys will help monitor trends, assess harvest, and inform management. Visit yukon.ca/en/outdoor-recreation-and-wildlife/yukon-wildlife/dalls-sheep for more information on thinhorn sheep population trends, monitoring and management.

We extend our thanks to the Kluane First Nation and the White River First Nation for their support for this survey. Many thanks to Sonny Parker (observer - Parks Canada) and Rob Girard from Capital Helicopters for the excellent

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