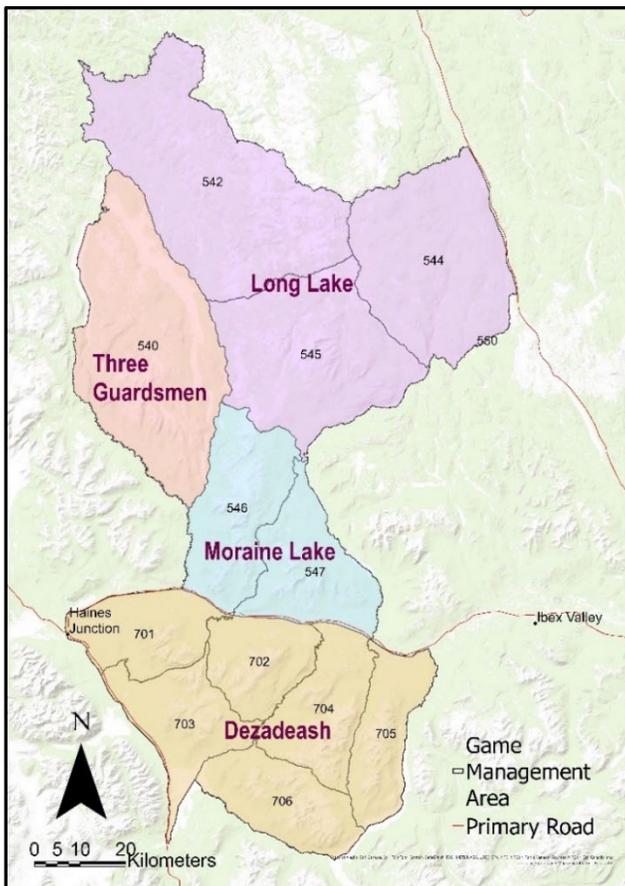


2025 Sheep Survey: Dezadeash, Moraine Lake, Three Guardsmen and Long Lake



A minimum count, aerial sheep survey of four Sheep Management Units (SMU) was flown in July 2025 to estimate abundance, distribution, lamb recruitment and adult sex ratios. These measures, when monitored over time, are indicators of sub-population trends.

Summary of 2025 survey results

Date: July 3 to 6, 2025

Hours flown: 21

Minimum counts (non-lamb)

Dezadeash: 361
Moraine Lake: 160
Three Guardsmen: 152
Long Lake: 138



Lamb: Nursery

Dezadeash: 35:100
Moraine Lake: 28:100
Three Guardsmen: 34:100
Long Lake: 27:100

Ram: Nursery

Dezadeash: 53:10
Moraine Lake: 39:100
Three Guardsmen: 55:100
Long Lake: 31:100

Results: In comparison to the previous survey completed in 2015/2016, results from the 2025 survey found that the non-lamb count for Dezadeash and Long Lake declined by 31 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively. The count for Three Guardsmen showed a very small increase (+6 per cent) while the count for Moraine Lake had a larger increase (+36 per cent). A finding of declines in some SMUs was anticipated, given that comparable declines were detected in surveys conducted in the Southwest and Klwane regions in 2022 and 2023 and in the Southern Lakes region in 2024.

Dezadeash and Long Lake experienced a decrease in the number of rams and nursery sheep since the previous survey in 2015. The 2025 counts for both Dezadeash and Long Lake SMUs are the lowest counts recorded in these areas. The Dezadeash area was previously surveyed in 1984, 1994, 2000 and 2015, while the Long Lake SMU was surveyed in 1993, 2011 and 2015/2016.

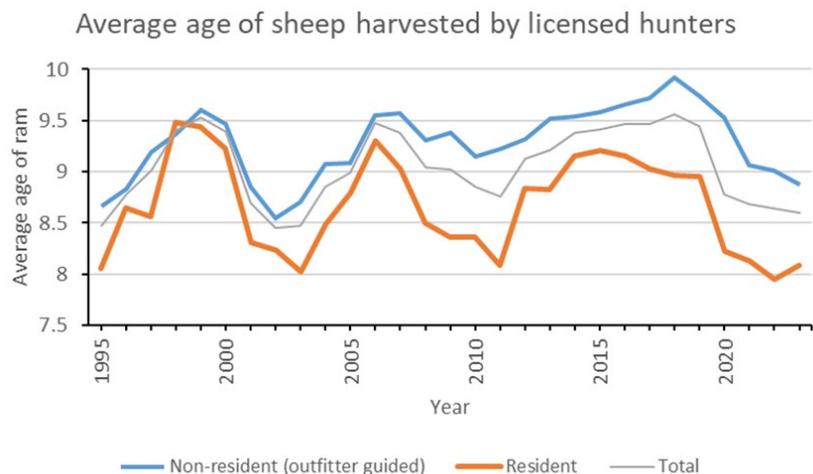
Over time, an average lamb recruitment of 25 lambs per 100 nursery sheep is considered necessary for a stable population; smaller ratios suggest a decline. The recruitment rates for all SMUs were above the threshold in 2025. In unharvested or lightly harvested sub-populations, the expected adult sex ratio is about 50 rams per 100 nursery sheep. In 2025, Moraine Lake and Long Lake had sex ratios below this benchmark.



Harvest: A full curl ram harvest rate of no more than 4 per cent of the non-lamb count is recommended to avoid impacting natural ram age structure and social interactions.

- Estimated harvest rates for Moraine Lake (3.1 per cent), Three Guardsmen (3.3 per cent), and Long Lake (2.2 per cent) were below the recommended 4 per cent threshold in 2024, based on the 2025 minimum count. Dezadeash marginally surpassed the recommended threshold (4.4 per cent).
- For each SMU, harvested rams included individuals older than eight years in the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 harvest seasons.

In the Yukon, ram horn growth is linked to the influence of the climatic drivers that operate on decadal and multi-decadal scales. Depending on when a ram is born, they may experience slower or faster horn growth during the years of maximum horn accretion (2 to 3 years of age). Slower horn growth means some rams tend to reach full curl at a later age. The annual average age of harvested rams fluctuates.



Management considerations: Across thinhorn sheep range, the effects of adverse environmental conditions that affect spring snow cover are more pronounced at higher latitudes. The frequency and magnitude of climate extremes are expected to increase. Between 2021 and 2023, thinhorn sheep in the Yukon, northern British Columbia and Alaska experienced challenging weather and climatic conditions, including high levels of winter and spring precipitation and snow volume accumulation. The deeper snow volumes and prolonged spring snow cover adversely impacted the survival of lambs born between 2021–2023, resulting in fewer nursery sheep. The 2025 survey found above average recruitment indexes for all SMUs, which should support recovery of these sub-populations.

What does this mean?

- Some sheep sub-populations in the Klwane region declined, likely due to climatic factors. However, good recruitment in 2025 should support recovery.

What's next?

- The Government of Yukon and First Nation governments will continue to monitor sheep in the region.

We extend our thanks to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation for their support during the survey. Many thanks to our pilot, Melvin Lageresson at Capital Helicopters for the excellent flying.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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