Maternal Penning to Enhance Survival of Caribou within the Klinse-Za Herd

External: Issued January 28th, 2019



Days in pen → 0 (wild) **Days until capture → 42**

There are only five weeks left before helicopters take to the air to once again bring Klinse-Za caribou back into the protection of the maternity pen on Mt. Rochfort. Logistic planning and specific teams are being put together to bring as much expertise and efficiency back together for the sixth year of operation. The intention is to bring 20 cows to the maternity pen this year to maximize return on investment and the contributions back to the population.

Since release from the pen last year, much has occurred. Starting with the good news; most released caribou have remained in close vicinity to the pen and are currently in one group on top of Mt. Rochfort; several animals have left the group but 11 animals remain. It is encouraging to see that mat pens may be an effective way to reintroduce caribou to parts of their historic range!



Figure 1. A large grizzly bear stands protective over the remains of C337S

Unfortunately there has been mortality of two caribou cows that were in the pen. C337S (spent two years in the maternity pen) was killed by a grizzly bear in early October near Bocock Peak; fortunately, her calf was able to escape and still remains with the group of animals on Mt. Rochfort.

A second mortality event was discovered in December on the Mountains west of the Clearwater valley. C347K (spent two years in the maternity pen) and her male calf C377K were killed by an avalanche in December. One lone bull was spotted at the top of the ridge during the initial investigation; avalanche conditions have been too treacherous to investigate the mortalities yet but we hope they were the only two caribou killed in the event.

An inspection of the mat pen was completed in early January to determine the extent of damage occurred throughout the off season. Due to the extensive improvements and hard work of everyone involved, the pen withstood severe winds and heavy snowfall quite well. Crews will be deployed in late February/early march to ensure the pen is fully repaired.



Figure 2. High wind events broke off/uprooted this tree during the off-season



Figure 3. Ripped geotextile in a particularly windy section of the maternity pen

Four new caribou cows were successfully captured and collared this winter during two different attempts. These newly collared animals will improve the effectiveness monitoring portion of the project enabling us to more accurately determine the whereabouts of more caribou in March; hopefully increasing the number of cows that we are able to bring into the maternity pen, and helping to increase the accuracy of our population survey in March, and into the future.



Figure 4. WII biologists releasing a newly collared caribou cow from the Klinse-Za herd



Figure 5. WII biologists taking blood samples from a cow caribou that are being sent to the provincial health lab for various types of important analysis- it is important to maximize data collected when caribou are captured

Follow up correspondence with team members involved in the upcoming capture process will be going out shortly!

The teams:

- Nîkanêse Wah tzee Stewardship Society
  - West Moberly First Nations (Chief Roland Willson/Tamara Dokkie)
  - Saulteau First Nations (Estelle Lavis/Naomi Owens)
- Caribou Mat Pen Working Group[1]
  - West Moberly First Nations (Tamara Dokkie/Jason Lee)
  - Saulteau First Nations (Naomi Owens/Carmen Marshall)
  - Wildlife Infometrics (Scott McNay/Matt Erickson, alt - Line Giguere)
- Mat Pen Technical Advisory Team[2]
  - Revelstoke penning trial (Rob Serrouya)
  - UNBC (Kathy Parker)
  - FLNRO (Chis Ritchie/Helen Schwantje)
  - MOE (Dale Seip)
- Support teams – capture specialists, veterinarian team, shepherds, lichen collectors

Thanks to our sponsors[3]



[1] The Caribou Mat Pen Working Group is a committee appointed by the Nîkanêse Wah tzee Stewardship Society.
[2] The Mat Pen Technical Advisory Team is an ad hoc committee chosen by the Working Group to obtain technical advice.
[3] Current and historic