

April 9, 2012
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Attn: Craig Fleener, Deputy Commissioner
333 Raspberry Rd.
Anchorage AK 99518

My name is Murray E. Fowler, DVM. A major part of my career was devoted to dealing with the medical conditions of zoo and wild animals. When llamas became an industry in the United States, I became associated with the industry. I studied the existing literature of camelid diseases and became conversant with their clinical problems by dealing with them in a teaching hospital. I was the section head of Zoological Medicine which cared for camelids and other zoo and wild animals.

I was intimately involved in some of the original research that was conducted on these animals in the United States. I also traveled to Peru, Bolivia and Chile and have examined thousands of llamas and alpacas destined for importation into the United States and Canada. I have worked with government officials and diagnostic laboratories to try to determine what infectious and parasitic diseases to which llamas and alpacas are susceptible or resistant to.

I am the author or coauthor of 85+ publications on camelid medicine, several of which dealt with infectious and or parasitic diseases. I am the author of a definitive textbook, in English, on the Medicine and Surgery of South American Camelids, now in its 3rd edition and published by Wiley-Blackwell, Ames, Iowa, 2010. As a result of my studies and experience I have kept current on the world scientific literature on these unique animals.

May I share with you some information that may be pertinent to the risk of diseases from llamas to free-ranging wildlife? It is important to understand that camelids are not ruminants (not taxonomically, anatomically, behaviorally or physiologically), and should not be categorized with cattle, sheep, goats or cervids. They may share some of the same gastrointestinal parasites that are common to many artiodactylids, but they have their own unique lice and coccidia.

I have read two publications that have come to my attention.

1. Examining the risk of disease transmission between wild Dall's sheep and mountain goats and introduced domestic sheep, goats and llamas in the Northwest territories, by Elena Garde, et al.
2. Communicable disease risks to wildlife from camelids in British Columbia by Helen Schwantje and Craig Stevens.

Both of these publications contain a wealth of information, however, there are some errors of interpretation that I take exception to. There has never been a documented case of South American Camelids (SAC) being responsible for disease transmission to cattle, sheep, goats or cervids. It is true that they acquire general infectious diseases that are common to most domestic animals, but SACs are not a reservoir for any infectious disease that may occur in cattle, sheep, goats or cervids.

I applaud the efforts to require health checks and parasite control, but I see no justification for carte blanche exclusion of llamas from wilderness areas. I would be happy to speak to anyone about the statements that I have made.

Sincerely,



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