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Fewer Winter Ticks Found on Yukon Elk

WHITEHORSE – Efforts to limit the winter tick population in the territory are garnering success, Environment Minister Elaine Taylor announced today.

“This critical step in implementing the Elk Management Plan is helping us achieve our goal of a healthy, viable elk population in Yukon,” Taylor said. “By reducing the winter tick population, government biologists are not only helping wild elk but also other wildlife species such as deer and moose.”

The 110 elk from the Takhini herd now penned up for the spring show very little sign of hair loss – a sign of winter tick activity – compared with this time last year. Confining most of the herd to a small pasture last year and a cold, wet summer seem to have removed most of the winter ticks from the herd’s range. This is the second year of the current winter tick control program for the Takhini herd.

Efforts are now underway to capture and confine elk from the Braeburn herd. The elk from both herds will be released in late spring once all winter ticks have fallen off.

At the same time as work is underway to address winter ticks, the Yukon government will be working with First Nations and stakeholders on an elk harvest strategy which meets the objectives identified in the Elk Management Plan. Objectives include reducing elk-vehicle collisions and conflicts with farmers, increasing the appreciation and value of elk as a wild food, and further reducing the risk of winter tick transfer to other wildlife species. Details surrounding elk harvest will be finalized in preparation for the start of the August 1 season.

The Elk Management Plan, adopted in June 2008, calls for a healthy, viable elk population in Yukon, responsible management of elk habitat and range, understanding the potential impact of elk on the land, and greater human use and appreciation of elk. The plan incorporates advice given by First Nations, biologists, Renewable Resources Councils and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

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