



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

External: Issued August 2nd, 2019



Days in pen → 137 (released)

Days in the wild → 5

Another year in the books!

July 29th, marked the final morning that caribou called the Mt. Rochfort pen home! Cows and calves were hesitant to cross the fence line that has kept them safe for the past 4 months. However, after multiple approaches to the fence, the lush green forage in the adjacent meadow lured two of the cows out of the pen.

Both cows returned inside the pen to retrieve their calves and eased their fellow comrades concerns about the unknown. All caribou left the pen in two groups: one at ~3pm and the other group later that night.



Figure 1. Upon release from the pen, caribou immediately began to feed on the plentiful forage.

A soft release method was chosen again this year for release of the penned caribou. The caribou guardians removed the electric fencing and opened a section of the geotextile fencing; this opening leads towards a small meadow, full of natural forage. A trail was cleared near the back of the meadow, which leads to the alpine; this meadow and trail serve as a travel corridor to the alpine habitat, ~200m from the pen. All of the released caribou left the pen without incident.



Figure 2. Calves were curious to explore their new home outside the pen! Leaving their mom's behind they moved eagerly towards the meadow.



The first re-collaring inside the pen

The first calf collared this year lost her collar during the first week after capture. We made the decision to re-collar her since, without a collar, we would be unable to track her movement after release from the pen. Two veterinarians from the Province of BC visited the pen to oversee the immobilization and re-collaring operation.



Figure 3. The calf was blindfolded and administered oxygen while under anesthesia. After a new VHF collar was fitted, the reversal to the immobilization drug was administered and the calf recovered quickly.

The process of re-collaring the calf occurred very quickly; once the immobilization drug had taken effect, one veterinarian blindfolded the calf and administered extra oxygen. The other veterinarian prepped the reversal and monitored vital signs. Once the new VHF collar was fitted, the calf was given a reversal to the immobilization drug, and quickly recovered. There were no complications with the capture process and the calf recovered quickly.

Thank you!

We will continue to monitor the location and movement patterns of the Klinse-Za caribou, during the post release period. Guardian crews are currently working on final repairs to the pen and prepping for the harsh winter before the next capture in March 2020.

We appreciate the hard work from everyone involved who makes this project a success each year!



Figure 4. The Klinse-Za caribou enjoying their new habitat outside of the maternity pen!

The teams:

- Níkanêse Wah tzee Stewardship Society
 - West Moberly First Nations (Chief Roland Willson/Tamara Dokkie)
 - Saulteau First Nations (Estelle Lavis/Naomi Owens/Carmen Richter)
- Caribou Mat Pen Working Group¹
 - West Moberly First Nations (Tamara Dokkie)
 - Saulteau First Nations (Naomi Owens; alt - Carmen Richter)
 - Wildlife Infometrics (Scott McNay/Matt Erickson, alt - Line Giguere)
- Mat Pen Technical Advisory Team²
 - Revelstoke penning (Rob Serrouya)
 - FLNRO (Helen Schwantje)
 - MOE (Dale Seip; will be needing a replacement)
- Support teams – capture specialists, veterinarian team, guardians, lichen collectors

¹ The Caribou Mat Pen Working Group is a committee appointed by the Níkanêse 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.



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³ Current and historic