

Policy Statement Concerning Llama Ban in National Parks

With reference to the current ban of ruminant pack animals in Canyon-lands National Park (CNP), the American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners finds insufficient scientific justification for this ruling. The ban was based on the risk of llamas spreading Johne's disease to the CNP resident Big Horn Sheep. Johne's disease has been diagnosed in only a few llamas in North America. We believe the diagnosis in so few cases to be an accurate assessment of the very low prevalence of Johne's disease in llama herds. Disease surveillance at herd level and at the individual animal level has been excellent due to the high individual value of llamas in North America.

The conclusion that pack llamas pose a threat to the Desert Big Horn Sheep or other susceptible free living wildlife of North America is ill founded given the low prevalence of this disease in llamas and the low risk of fecal shedding of this organism in a concentration sufficient to infect free ranging individuals. Transmission of John's disease depends upon ingestion of large numbers of organisms by young animals within the first few months of life or continuous exposure of older animals to high doses of the organism. Typically, only animals affected with advanced disease shed high numbers of the causative agent, *Mycobacterium Para tuberculosis*, in feces. At this stage of infection, such individuals would be unfit for packing due to poor body condition.

Until llamas, or for that matter other domestic livestock, are reasonably proven to be a significant threat for transmitting Johne's disease to free living wildlife, no bans should be placed on the movement of pack small ruminants in National Parks or the grazing of ruminants in Bureau of Land Management or Forest Service lands in North America based on supposition of risk of Johne's disease.

Revised May 2008