

Division of Wildlife Conservation
Bruce Dale, Director
Region II, Anchorage Area Office
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, AK, 99518



Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Sam Cotten, Commissioner
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526
www.adfg.alaska.gov

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Ken Marsh
Public Information Officer
Anchorage, (907) 267-2892

Biologists Seek Public's Help in Anchorage Moose Count Pilot Study

(Anchorage) – How many moose roam the Anchorage Bowl? State wildlife managers need to know. Unfortunately, traditional aerial counts aren't always practical due to poor weather conditions and flight restrictions imposed over the busy metropolitan area. That's why Alaska Department of Fish and Game research biologists are working with wildlife management staff to test a new approach that, with help from Anchorage residents, may one day allow the city's moose to be surveyed from the ground.

"We'll be collecting DNA from Anchorage moose and using it to identify parents, offspring, and siblings," said Research Biologist Sean Farley. "Taken together, that information may allow us to estimate the size of Anchorage's moose population."

For part of that work, the department will need Anchorage residents' assistance. On February 26 and 27, citizens are invited to report moose sightings within the Anchorage Bowl. Sightings may be reported by phoning 267-2253, texting 782-5051, or online at the department website at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/>. Reports should include moose location, time of the sighting, and number of moose seen at a given location.

Research and management staff will receive the reports and make an effort to collect DNA samples from as many moose as they can. A small skin biopsy will be taken with darts designed to lightly strike a moose, collect a sample in the tip, and fall to the ground. In addition to darting, DNA may also be gathered from road kills, hunter harvests, and freshly deposited moose pellets.

"This is just the first test of new technology that, if successful, could improve our management of Anchorage area moose populations," said Area Wildlife Biologist Dave Battle.

For safety purposes, citizens are reminded to avoid approaching moose closely and to give department staff plenty of space as they work to collect DNA from moose. Staff will be wearing flare-orange vests with stencils clearly identifying them as department employees.

Project expenses are covered by federal Pittman Robertson funds matched to state Fish and Game funds generated from hunting and fishing license fees. For more information about the Anchorage moose count pilot study, contact Ken Marsh at 267-2892 or ken.marsh@alaska.gov.

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