

Rates And Causes of Ewe and Ram Mortality in the Chugach, Talkeetna, and North Wrangell Mountains, Alaska, 2009–2022

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ABSTRACT: Mortality curves for Dall’s sheep have been published by multiple researchers. In general, mortality rates are low but nonzero for sheep ages 2–8. During recent winters, however, overwinter mortality rates in radio collared animals in some mountain ranges in Alaska were much greater than reported previously. In winter 2019–2020, 34% of all radio collared sheep in the Talkeetna mountains, and 10% of those in the Chugach died from a variety of causes including avalanches, predation, disease, falls, and malnutrition. During the winter of 2020–2021, 19% of the Talkeetna mountains study population and 6% of those in the Chugach died from similar causes. In winter 2021–2022, collared animals in the Talkeetnas experienced a 29% mortality rate, with 20% mortality in collared animals in the Chugach mountains. We will review rates and causes of mortality in radio collared rams and ewes in the Chugach, Wrangell, and Talkeetna mountains between 2009–2022. In most winters, overall adult mortality rates were between 5–12%. Accelerated mortality rates nearly triple those levels in recent years have contributed to population declines.

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