

Sheep Capture By Gary Tennison

On a cold but sunny and clear day last December, Friday the 13th to be a little more precise. Several state agencies, Indian tribes, and hunting organizations came together in a unified group to capture and test some sheep from the Clemens Mountain herd.

Some of the sheep have been heard coughing, and that has raised concern that some of them may have a lung disease that can be spread between the sick and the healthy if in fact any of them are sick. There are no real symptoms of any sickness, just the occasional coughing from a few of the sheep. The cause could just be irritation from the burrs and thistles in the area where they are feeding.

The Washington Department of Fish and Game is taking the situation very serious however. That is how Mike Price, Del Berg and I from the SCI Northwest Chapter find ourselves working with the WDFW, biologists, Indian tribes and other volunteer organizations including the Seattle Puget Sound Chapter, to capture and test some of the sheep.

Once the sheep had been baited and captured in the sheep trap, they were funneled down a shoot where they could be hobbled one at a time and brought out of the trap and laid out on tarps to get worked over.

One by one a total of fifteen sheep were blind folded then subjected to a blood sample draw, a nose swab sample, ear tagged, and released with a somewhat bewildered look on their faces!

All of the data collected is being sent to the Washington State University to be analyzed with the hope that the herd will receive a clean bill of health.

The good news is that the test results have come back before I have even finished writing this article. None of the sheep have tested positive and the heard is healthy!

This was not only fun, it was an interesting and rewarding day.