

## **Introducing the pamphlet: *Tuberculosis in British Columbia's Wildlife***

### **Tuberculosis in British Columbia's wildlife? You have got to be kidding!**

**Actually, we are not saying we have it but we want the outdoor public to look for it to prove we don't!!**

In 2007, a beef bull from a farm in the Vanderhoof area in BC was found infected with *Mycobacterium bovis*, the organism that causes bovine tuberculosis (TB). Despite extensive testing in BC and Alberta, no further positive cattle were found. This was the first diagnosis of bovine TB in BC for nearly 20 years. In 2008, two young beef cows from two ranches in the central interior were diagnosed with bovine TB. Testing of cattle in contact with these heifers is underway. All three positive cattle had the same strain of TB, suggesting these cases are related and that the disease is present in an as-yet undetected cattle herd in BC.

To our knowledge, bovine TB has never been diagnosed in BC wildlife, however, a number of wildlife species are potentially susceptible. This is a serious disease that has significant effects on agricultural economies, wildlife management and the potential to affect human health.

Bovine TB is currently present in two free-ranging wildlife populations in Canada; in wood bison within the Wood Buffalo National Park ecosystem in northern Alberta and the NWT, and in cervids (primarily elk) in and around Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba. It is also present in deer in two US states, Michigan and Minnesota. All of these jurisdictions are battling with the disease but have a long uphill climb before success can be achieved.

The Ministry of Environment is concerned about the TB cases in BC cattle and is starting to collaborate with a number of interest groups, First Nations, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to provide evidence that wildlife in BC are free of TB. While we believe that wildlife are not involved with the TB cases in cattle, there are many examples of transmission of the disease from livestock to wildlife and from wildlife to livestock - we cannot be assured at this time that wildlife is free of this disease until we look for it. In most cases when TB is found in wildlife the disease was recognized only after it became well established and significant resources were needed to control the disease. Although we believe BC wildlife is at low risk for TB, it is an excellent opportunity to work with our partners on an important disease issue of humans, livestock and wildlife.

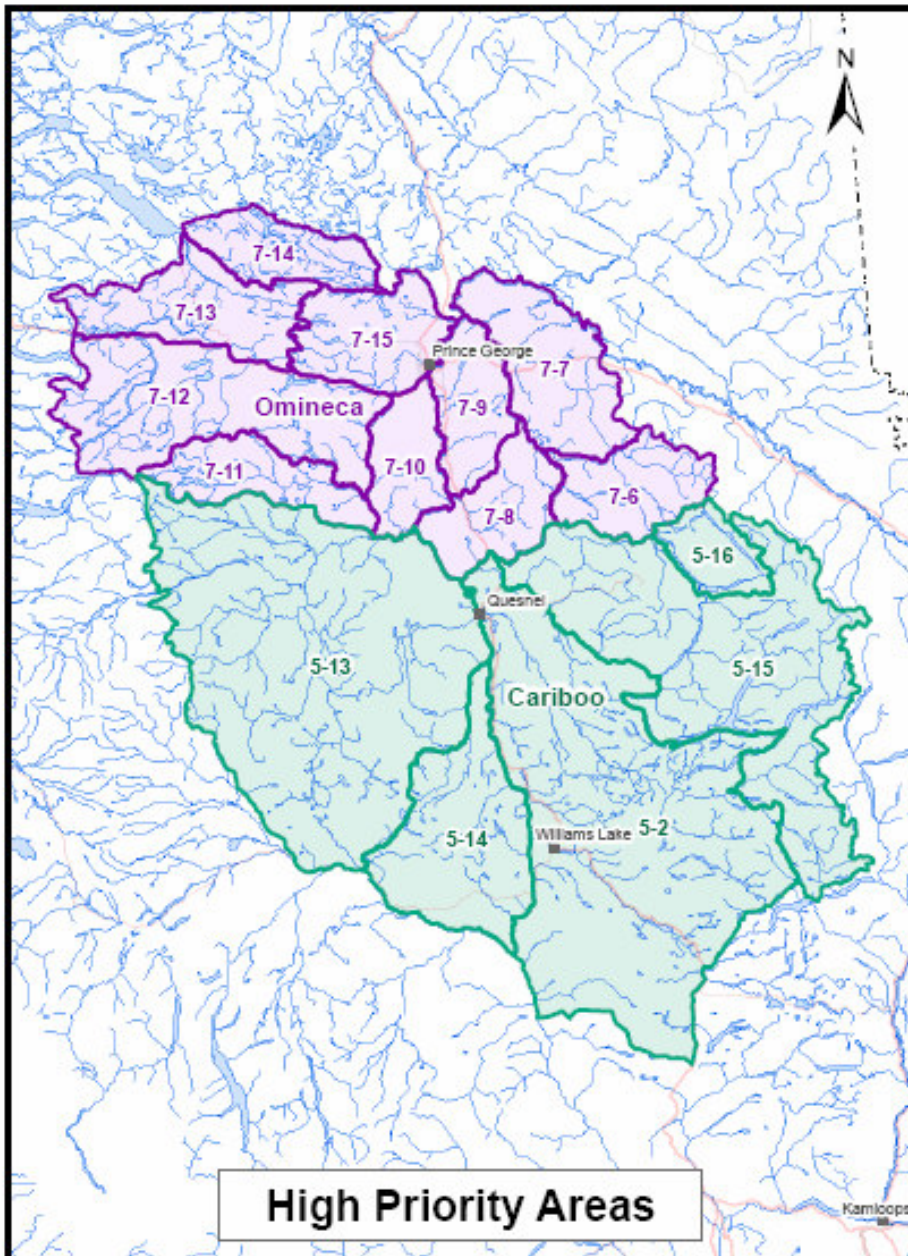
The MOE BC Wildlife Health Program has formed a Tuberculosis Working Group in the Vanderhoof area to work on the issue, starting in the area of first concern. We agreed that our first task was to promote awareness in the hunting community. We partnered with the Centre for Coastal Health to develop the enclosed pamphlet to educate hunters and outdoor enthusiasts about TB in wildlife, what it looks like and what the risk is to everyone. Please join us by helping to distribute the pamphlet and improving the knowledge of this disease. The BC Wildlife Health Program is focusing efforts on education and looking for TB in the highest priority areas that are illustrated in Figure 1. We hope that everyone joins with us to look for TB, to ensure the ongoing health of our most precious BC wildlife resources. If you have any questions or see anything unusual with wildlife or their health, please call the MOE Wildlife Health Program staff.

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For more information about Tuberculosis in wildlife species  
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/hunting/deer/tb/index.html>  
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/disease/bovine.html>

H. Schwantje  
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**Figure 1: High Priority Areas for Tb Surveillance**