



## FACT SHEET:

# THE COMMUNITY-BASED WILDLIFE HEALTH SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

Prepared by the Kutz Research Group, July 2024



Ten years ago, we started the CBWHS Program to answer wildlife health concerns voiced by Northerners.



**GOAL:** Understand the health/status of caribou and muskoxen and create a wide network for detecting/responding to emerging diseases and other wildlife health issues.

We built a great TEAM:

- community HTOs - Kugluktuk, Ulukhaktok, Ekaluktutiak
- governments - Nunavut, NWT
- industry - Canada North Outfitting
- researchers - U of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

**ACTIONS:** Bring harvester-based sampling of caribou and muskoxen together with Indigenous Knowledge ("IK" - local, ecological, belief systems, ways of life) and Western science to ...

- assess different populations
- rapidly detect and respond to diseases, population shifts
- focus research on community/Inuit Nunangat questions
- build community capacity for wildlife health monitoring
- elevate IK in wildlife management



**RESULTS:** 1000s of caribou/muskox data from 100s of hunter-submitted sample kits and "strange tissues" have informed about emerging bacteria *Brucella* (a survival/reproduction limiter and human food safety concern in both species) and *Erysipelothrix* (linked to mass muskoxen mortalities and likely with major population declines); teeth and trace element abnormalities; other key health indicators (from testing and IK) for predicting status/population changes; and more.

**LOOKING AHEAD:** Over the next 3 years, we will i) assess the program, improve as needed; ii) expand it to Sach's Harbour and Baker Lake, NU; iii) continue the monitoring and research (adding trace element and biting insect investigations) to better understand emerging/spotlighted wildlife health threats.



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