

SONORAN PRONGHORN MONTHLY UPDATE

December 19, 2005

Captive Breeding: On December 10-11, we successfully captured 3 young females from the US population and put them in the newly completed southwest quarter of the pen. All these does appear healthy and have grouped up together and are exploring their new home. They have been observed foraging on native forage and alfalfa hay (see below) and drinking water.

On December 2 we noticed that one of the females in the north half of the pen was looking very thin, although she was eating and moving around with the herd. The pen monitors also reported that another female was also looking thin. We entered the pen to assess the forage conditions in the pen and determined that the pronghorn were heavily browsing everything that was green in the pen. Due to the cold weather, there were no green annuals and the shrubs were not responding to our irrigation. Many of the trees in the washes exhibited a browse line.

We immediately determined that there was not enough easily available forage in the pen, and decided to supplement their diet with alfalfa hay. That afternoon, the pen monitors put a small amount of alfalfa in the pen, spreading it around on the bushes in the areas where they were foraging. The Cabeza Prieta also had their volunteers begin construction of a feeder for alfalfa similar to the design used in the peninsular pronghorn captive pen in Baja. Within 2 days, the monitors noticed the pronghorn were eating the alfalfa on the bushes. Currently, all the pronghorn are feeding heavily on the alfalfa at the feeder. We have also noticed that the 2 females that were thin seem to have put on a little weight, and while not looking totally healthy, seem to be slowly recovering.

Due to this lesson, we are also putting alfalfa in the southwest quarter of the pen for the new pronghorn as there is not a lot of native forage in there right now either.

We are still planning to capture 5 animals from Mexico for the pen on January 13-14, after completing a survey there on January 9-12, depending on getting permits in time from Mexico. Those animals will go in the southeast quarter of the pen.

Water Projects: We are working on the final planning details and NEPA compliance for 3 new waters on the Cabeza Prieta, to be built this winter.

Forage Enhancements: Nothing to report.

Other Projects: Nothing to report.

Wild Pronghorn: During the pronghorn capture, we observed 41 pronghorn. Two groups of 12, one group of 10, one group of 5 and 2 single females. Most were seen in the southern Mohawk Valley on the Refuge, and 2 groups on the BMGR in the northern San Cristobal Valley. We also captured 2 females, put VHF radio collars on, and released them. All three days of the capture were heavily overcast and it was very difficult to spot pronghorn. There is no doubt we probably missed some pronghorn. The two pronghorn with radio collars were checked by air last Sunday, and both were doing well. One was in a group of 13 and one was by herself but near the other group.