



yukon wildlife preserve

April 13, 2022

We are sad to report the passing of a young muskox calf born Friday April 8, 2022. The muskox calf was found deceased on Tuesday April 12, 2022. This calf was the first baby born this spring at the Yukon Wildlife Preserve (YWP).

The Animal Care team watches new mothers and calves closely to assess their health. While the calf was less active than expected and nursing less than expected, it was moving throughout the habitat with its mother. The Animal Care team got an opportunity to do a physical exam and provide nutritional support to the calf on Monday. They did not find any issues during the physical exam. Often some additional food, electrolytes and vitamins are enough when a baby animal is showing signs of weakness. The calf was immediately returned to its mother following this intervention, which accepted the calf back without issue. The mother and calf stayed close together, even after the calf was found to have passed away.

YWP Veterinarian Dr. Maria Hallock conducted a necropsy on April 13, 2022. This post-mortem analysis found that an intestinal blockage (caused by intussusception) in the small intestine was present. In this case, evidence suggests that the issue was congenital. Getting an accurate diagnosis and a successful surgical treatment, and subsequent successful recovery in a wildlife species of this age would be extremely difficult.

Additional tissue samples will be sent to a lab for analysis to verify there were no other confounding factors. However, the post-mortem diagnosis was quite clear.

The YWP is expecting as many as 5 more muskox calves to be born this spring. The muskox bred between mid-July and mid-August. With about a 9 month gestation, this first calf was only a week early. Breeding is done according to the YWP's collection management plan, which plans for genetic, age and gender diversity to ensure a long-term healthy population. The YWP last bred muskox in 2017. The YWP also expects to see baby Bison and Caribou this spring.

"It's always very exciting when we start seeing babies," said Executive Director Jake Paleczny, "But it's also hard when things don't go the way we hope they will."

The Yukon Wildlife Preserve is a zoological institution and a non-profit charity dedicated to connecting our visitors with the natural world. As ambassadors of the Yukon Wildlife Preserve's animals, lands, and operations, the operating society proudly maintains populations of 11 species of Yukon wildlife in large natural habitats. The society also conducts educational programming and funds a wildlife rehabilitation program for Yukon's injured and orphaned wildlife. The facilities and the level of care provided to the Preserve's animals successfully meets the stringent criteria of Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums, to which the Yukon Wildlife Preserve is a long-time member.

For more information:

Jake Paleczny
Executive Director
Yukon Wildlife Preserve
867-456-7313
jake@yukonwildlife.ca