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THREE-PHASED APPROACH PROPOSED TO DEAL WITH TICK INFESTATION

WHITEHORSE – Environment Yukon’s wildlife managers are moving forward on a three-phased approach to manage and remove the winter tick infestation found last winter within the territory’s wild elk population, Environment Minister Dennis Fentie announced today.

Department biologists are looking at action that could be taken in late winter when the ticks are most active in reproducing themselves and attaching themselves to host wildlife. One of the proposals being considered is to provide medicated feed that might stop or slow the spread of the ticks in the wild.

“The use of medicated feed can be a concern for many people and we will need to consult with the First Nations whose traditional territory includes the elk range, the respective Renewable Resources Councils and elk farmers in the area, on how best to administer medicated feed to the elk in our efforts to immediately address the control of winter tick,” Fentie said.

The second phase is to prepare a long term winter tick management plan through consultations with the department’s wildlife management partners as well as conferring with scientists who have tick management expertise. Those partners include First Nations, Renewable Resources Councils and organizations that have contributed to the Elk Management Strategy.

The goal of this phase is to determine a risk assessment on how the government could manage the infestation.

The third phase would see the risk assessment recommendations and proposed elk management plan going out to the public for review and comment before further action is taken by the government.

The Yukon elk – winter tick situation does not have parallels in southern jurisdictions and more information is needed before a reliable assessment of the risk can be made.

Fentie said the department has been investing a lot of time and staff effort, ever since the presence of the ticks was confirmed last winter, to develop short and long term options that could be considered for managing the infestation.

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