

# SONORAN PRONGHORN MONTHLY UPDATE

February 2, 2012

## *Captive Breeding:*

### **Cabeza Prieta Captive Breeding Pen**

We released the 5 bucks from the December boma capture that we moved to the holding pen on Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (Orpi) on December 29. All five walked over the Growler Mountains, and back to the vicinity of the captive breeding pen in 5 days after their release. There they met and mingled with the pronghorn from the 2010 release that were still near the pen.

We did another boma capture in the south half of the pen on January 5 and 6, 2012. We caught 21 pronghorn in the boma, many of which we had caught previously in December. The pronghorn that had been caught in December just received vaccines, and were released back into the pen. We caught 6 females and 2 males to transport to the temporary 5-acre holding pen on Orpi.



Moving pronghorn to Orpi holding pen by helicopter.

Our original drug protocol was to give the pronghorn a dose of A3080 and Xylazine together in one shot, and then follow with Ketamine if their temperatures went up. However, this allowed temperatures to increase until the Ketamine was injected and took effect. During the January capture, ambient temperatures were 10+ degrees above normal, so we decided to give all three drugs in one injection to try to prevent the higher body temperatures in the pronghorn. We used this method with the first two females to be transported to Orpi. Body temperatures did stay low; however, one of the pronghorn stopped breathing and died on the way to the helicopter. We assumed this was a negative reaction to the drugs by this individual. We used this protocol on the next two females going to Orpi, halving the Ketamine dosage. However, one of those animals also stopped breathing and died. We successfully moved the other two pronghorn via helicopter, to the holding pen, but stopped for the day to reassess our methods. We decided that the problem was likely caused by giving the 3 drugs at once.

The next day, we went back to the original protocol, and gave the Ketamine dose after the original A3080/Xylazine injection. We successfully moved 4 more females and 2 bucks to the holding pen on Orpi, without any additional mortality. These 6 pronghorn were held in the holding pen for 2 weeks, and then released on January 20, 2012. Observers at the holding pen saw them head directly north, again over the Growler Mountains. We assumed they were headed back to the pen also, but we failed to detect them near the pen with telemetry.

During an aerial telemetry flight on January 15, we found 5 of the 6 in a group on South Tac, and one doe by herself on the Air Force range east of South Tac. We also found 4 of the 5 bucks from the first release from Orpi with most of the 2010 released animals on North Tac. The remaining buck from the first release was still in the vicinity of the captive breeding pen.



Transporting into the Orpi holding pen

All the pronghorn handled and released back into the breeding pen are doing fine, as are all the other pronghorn in the pen. We have 10 adult females in the north half, and 12 in the south half, all which should be pregnant with twins.

Status of Pronghorn in Cabeza Pen

Jan 2012

<b>NORTH HALF</b>		<b>SOUTH HALF</b>	
Adult Females	10	Adult Females	12
Yearling Females ( <i>b</i> 2011)	4	Yearling Females ( <i>b</i> 2011)	6
Breeding Buck	1	Breeding Buck	1
Back-up Buck	1	Back-up Buck	1
Yearling Bucks ( <i>b</i> 2011)	4	Yearling Bucks ( <i>b</i> 2011)	8
Fawns (born 2012)		Fawns (born 2012)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Total Pen</b>	<b>48</b>		

## Kofa Captive Breeding Pen

We've had two mortalities in the Kofa pen. One female died on January 1, 2012. This female did not become fully anesthetized despite numerous injections of drugs on the transport from the Cabeza pen to the Kofa pen, and consequently sustained a high body temperature for a significant amount of time. She did not recover well from the drugs at Kofa, and went downhill from there.

The second female died on January 12. She seemed to be fine after the capture and transport, and integrated well with the other pronghorn for 3 weeks. Then we started to notice she was not being seen with the group, and the monitors went and checked on her with telemetry. At that point, she didn't seem able to get up. We arranged for Anne Justice-Allen, the Department veterinarian, to come down and assess her condition the next day. However, we found her dead the next morning. Observations from the gross necropsy showed she had a ruptured bladder. She also only had one fetus, and it had been dead for awhile, possible evidence of other problems. Results from the diagnostic lab showed that she had a lesion and inflammation in the bladder which led to the rupture. The cause of the lesion and inflammation is unknown, but definitely not EHD or Bluetongue, and no known association with the drugs used. It's possible the trauma of the capture could have caused or aggravated it, but the link to the capture is low because of length of time involved between the capture and when symptoms manifested.

The remaining 11 pronghorn in the pen all appear to be recovered from the capture and adjusting well to the new pen. They have been feeding on native forage in the pen, using the alfalfa and have found the water sources. The 6 adult does all appear to be pregnant.

The well at the Kofa pen has been completed. With the help of volunteers from the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club, the irrigation lines have also been constructed. We are in the process of installing storage tanks and a pump. We are also in the process of getting the necessary EA checklist in place to start constructing the waters for pronghorn on Kofa.

### Status of Pronghorn in Kofa Pen

	Jan 2012
Adult Females	6
Yearling Females ( <i>b</i> 2011)	3
Breeding Buck	1
Back-up Buck	1
Fawns (born 2012)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>



One of the first pronghorn on Kofa refuge.

### **Released Pronghorn**

The 2010 released pronghorn are still ranging mostly in the vicinity of the pen. They were joined by the first 5 bucks released this year from the Orpi holding pen. Most of these pronghorn moved up to North Tac, but have since moved back into the Childs Valley. One of the females from the second release this year at Orpi has joined this group. Hopefully, they are starting to explore the area more and will eventually move away from the pen. The other 5 pronghorn from the second Orpi release were last seen on South Tac.

***Water Projects:*** We will be building a permanent water on South Tac this month to replace Halliwell Tank. This will greatly reduce our water hauling needs for this summer. The new project is located in better-quality habitat for pronghorn compared to the original location.

***Forage Enhancements:*** All our forage enhancements have received ample rain recently, so we are not irrigating at any of them. We have been doing some repairs to Lower Well and Adobe forage plots in anticipation of needing to irrigate at them in the near future.

***Other Projects:*** Nothing new to report

***Wild Pronghorn:*** On December 18-19, we captured 9 wild pronghorn (8 females and 1 male) and put either GPS or VHF collars on them to increase our monitoring ability of the wild herd. Unfortunately on the telemetry flight on December 26, 4 of these (3 females and one buck) were dead. Conditions for capturing were optimal; it was unseasonable cool, overcast, and it had rained the day before and the morning of the capture. Only one pronghorn got an elevated

temperature, but she was not one of the mortalities. Two of these mortalities have been investigated, and they were killed by coyotes. We suspect a combination of events related to the capture led to them becoming easy prey for coyotes. The dart always causes a bit of bleeding, and although we wash the blood off, there is likely still a scent of blood that coyotes can pick up on. The pronghorn may experience lingering effects from the drugs, and they are separated from the group during the capture. One of the females also had a leg injury after the drug reversal and release. However, the buck was captured with a net gun, and was not given any drugs and did not experience any bleeding. His death is more of a mystery. The results of this capture have led us to reevaluate the use of dart gunning as a capture method for wild pronghorn. The remaining 5 pronghorn are alive and have reestablished themselves into the wild herds.



Group of pronghorn at the waters in the Kofa pen.