

TO: Interested and Invested Members of the Public

Thank you for letting us bring this issue to your attention and for dedicating the time we know you will take in order to thoroughly read this dossier.

While Muskoxen in and around populated areas in the Nome area has been an issue for nearly two decades, it has escalated to the point where we can no longer stay silent while hoping that state game management entities will do the right thing and manage muskoxen as a state resource. There have been numerous newspaper articles (local, national, and international), news reports, and public testimonies speaking to this issue.

On December 13, 2022, we lost our friend, community member, and public servant, CSO Curtis Worland, because of a muskox. In the 12/22/22 edition of the Nome Nugget, it was printed that “Tony Gorn with the ADF&G said in an email to the Nugget that initially, ADF&G did not respond with AST or the ambulance *‘because we weren’t notified. We were not aware of the event until several hours later.’*” This is a major problem because ADF&G should have been one of Curtis Worland’s first calls for assistance instead of attempting to move a herd of agitated muskoxen by himself. Could this be partly due to the fact that ADF&G themselves have shared with the Nome Nugget, as reported in the Anchorage Daily News in August 2012, that *“Fish and Game staff say obvious solutions have been tried and do not work”*?

This is not a new problem; muskoxen have been encroaching on the personal property of Nome residents (both inside city limits and subdivisions just outside) since the early-to-mid 2000s, and it has been escalating ever since. A 2014 KTOO article highlights how dangerous it has been for dogs and dog owners and how ineffective F&G policies and practices were even back then. In 2019, the state wasted \$1.9 million on a new fence around the Nome Airport in an attempt to keep muskoxen off of the runway, which air travel is rural Alaska’s lifeline.

Please find attached the summation of our work since Curtis’ death. We have compiled information via a questionnaire and have photos, petition signatures, and letters of support. We ask you to do right by all of us who are or have been negatively affected by muskoxen and review all of the documents submitted today.

Respectfully,

Miranda Musich and Sarah Swartz

RELATED LINKS:

[QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES - CLICK TO READ STORIES AND TESTIMONIALS](#)

[PETITION LINK - THIS IS AN ACTIVE PETITION](#)

[12/13/22 NOME NUGGET ARTICLE REGARDING THE LOSS OF CURTIS WORLAND](#)

[12/22/22 NOME NUGGET ARTICLE REFERENCED ABOVE](#)

[2020 NOME NUGGET YEAR IN REVIEW: Charlie Lean put forward a proposal asking that musk ox be added to the list of species that may be taken under a proxy permit in GMU 22.](#)

[2020 NOME NUGGET ARTICLE REFERENCING AN ATTACK ON THE WORLAND'S DOG LOT \(PHOTOS SHARED BELOW\)](#)

[2019 ARTICLE REFERENCING THE \\$1.9 MILLION SPENT ON NOME AIRPORT FENCING](#)

[A 2019 NOME NUGGET ARTICLE REGARDING MUSKOXEN FORMERLY LEAVING TOWN IN THE WINTER](#)

[2019 PHOTO OF A HERD GRAZING ON MUNZ FIELD - IMPACTING AIR TRAVEL IN THE REGION](#)

[2019 NOME NUGGET ARTICLE REGARDING MORE OF KIRSTEN BEY'S SLED DOGS BEING KILLED IN A SINGLE INCIDENT - ADF&G STATES THERE AREN'T MORE MUSKOXEN IN TOWN, WHICH SHOWS THEY ARE GETTING MORE AGGRESSIVE](#)

[2017 NOME NUGGET ARTICLE REFERENCING THREE DOG DEATHS IN A SINGLE WEEK, DIFFERENT LOCATIONS, DIFFERENT HERDS](#)

[2017 ARTICLE OF DOGS KILLED IN KIRSTEN BEY'S DOG LOT](#)

[2014 KTOO ARTICLE REFERENCED ABOVE](#)

[A 2012 ADN ARTICLE FEATURING CO-PETITIONER SARAH SWARTZ](#)

[PDF REGARDING THE ORIGINAL INTENT OF REINTRODUCTION OF MUSKOXEN](#)

PETITION STATEMENT:

Muskoxen are a prehistoric arctic land mammal that disappeared in Alaska by the early 1900s. Since the reintroduction of this species in the 1930s (specifically in the Bering Strait Region in the 1970s), their existence has morphed from a novelty into a nuisance to now - dangerous and sometimes lethal.

We, the residents of rural Alaska, request that Governor Dunleavy, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and any other stakeholders in wildlife management in Alaska hold accountability and honor their duty in managing the game and wildlife of the Bering Strait region and beyond. Change is desperately needed for the citizens of this region to feel empowered in defending themselves and their animals without fear of prosecution. We request training for local state/government agencies so we may reasonably co-exist as we have done and continue to do with other wildlife.

In the last half-century, the muskox population has exploded and spread throughout the region without a proper nor effective contingency strategy to control it. Stemming from an ineffective hunting and conservation strategy, muskoxen have become an invasive species. This has allowed these animals to flourish in a way that has become dangerous and lethal to animals and, now, humans.

As rural Alaskans, we pride ourselves on being able to be caretakers of the wildlife population and co-exist with them, but this has gone beyond that. In recent years, muskoxen have increasingly caused destruction and dog deaths. They have destroyed graveyards, decimating the locations of our loved ones' final resting places. They have eaten food that people grew for their personal food security. Families cannot safely subsist on the tundra or let their children play outside without the looming threat to their lives and personal safety. Muskoxen hang around and spend time on runways, endangering planes and people, which airplanes are our primary source of transportation and moving freight.

Recently, Nome lost a valuable community member and public servant. CSO Curtis Worland (Alaska State Troopers) was fatally gored by a muskox on December 13th. Over the past decade, this had become a growing fear of the citizens in the region, and now our worst nightmare has become a reality. Our dear friend Kamey Kapp Worland is now a young widow due to the gross mismanagement of an animal introduced without any contingency plan to keep the public safe.

News of Curtis' death has spread across the globe. Hundreds of articles were written and shared in dozens of prominent major news outlets, including People Magazine, NYPost, Washington Examiner, Daily Mail, Newsweek, USA Today as well as ABC, CBS, NBS, and Yahoo News online. We are tired of unanswered calls for aid in

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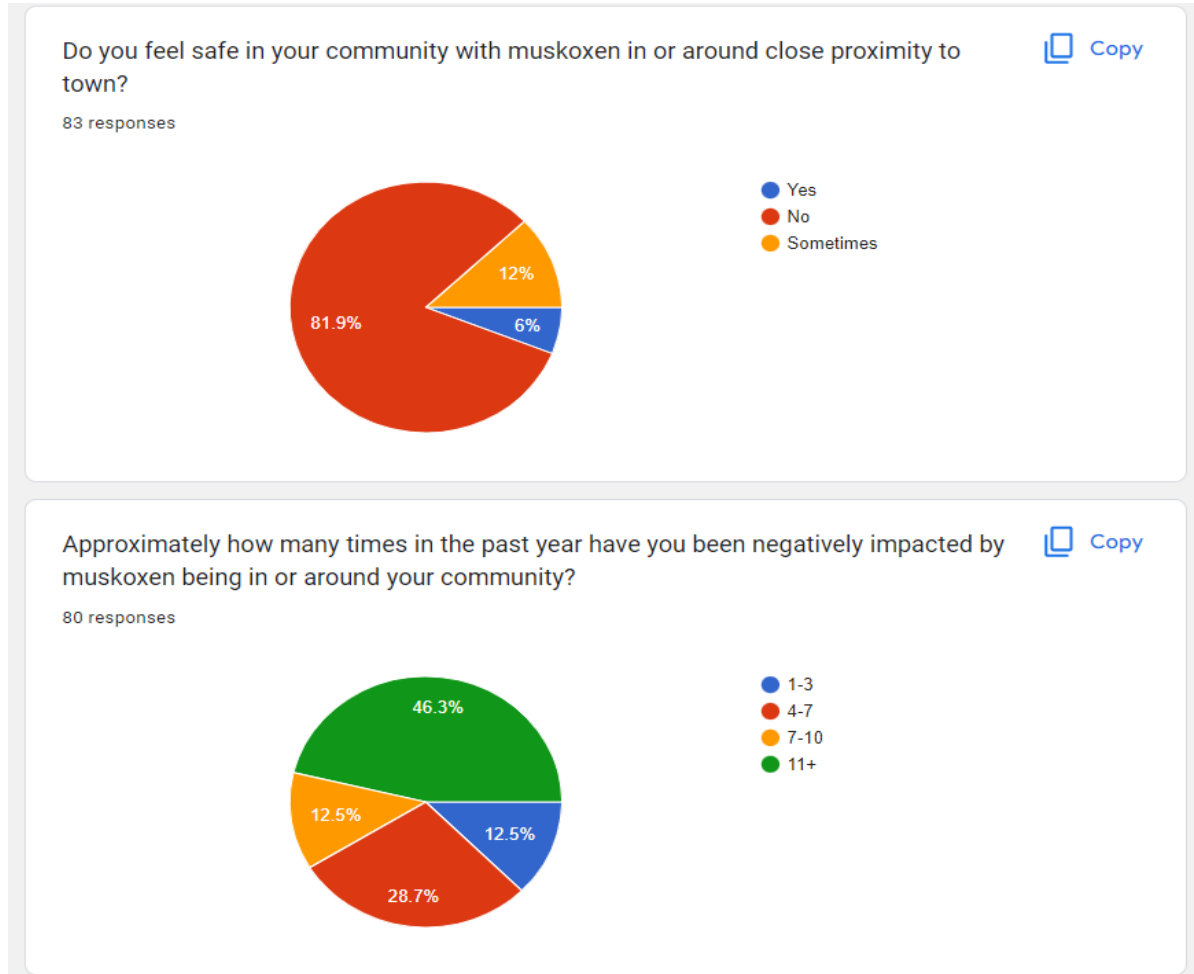
managing these animals. We are tired of losing our pets, our property, our food, and now our friends.

FACTS:

- Muskox had died out in Alaska by the early 1900s
- Not reintroduced to Alaska until the 1930s, and then not reintroduced to the Nome/Bering Strait region until the 1970s
- Muskoxen have hurt or killed dozens of dogs in recent years
- They have now escalated to attacking and killing people
- They are a danger to passenger and cargo airplanes because of their proximity to the runway in which previous efforts to keep them away have been unsuccessful
- They trample and destroy the gravesites of our loved ones, causing financial hardships and emotional trauma
- They were not in the region when Nome was established as a permanent gold-mining settlement and had not been in the region as an established food or subsistence resource at any point during the colonization of Alaska
- Unlike moose and bears, they have no respect or fear of populated areas and instead seek them out to get away from predators such as wolves and bears and to seek easy food sources (i.e., people's gardens and grass growing near homes)
- People are afraid to defend their life and property with deadly weapons because of fear of prosecution from the state
- We cannot coexist with them as we can with other wildlife, such as bears, moose, caribou, and reindeer, as they have no fear or respect for populated areas
- Fish and Game and other authorities have been repeatedly notified of the issues, and nothing has been done
- The state legislature supports Alaskans' "right to mush," and while not statutory, they support mushing and its significance to Alaskan people and cultures. Muskoxen are a barrier to this Alaskan right

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- A recent questionnaire shows that the people of the region overwhelmingly do not feel safe around muskoxen, and they are experiencing negative interactions with them repeatedly



Informal questionnaire results show the vast majority of respondents do not feel safe around muskoxen and have been negatively impacted repeatedly

REQUESTED SOLUTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- An emergency order to reduce the number of muskoxen in and around Nome city limits
- Allow culling of repeated nuisance animals and donate the meat to communities in need
- Better management of predator populations of bears and wolves, which have driven the animals into populated areas
- Provide EFFECTIVE resources for non-lethal ways to move herds
- Training local LEOs to be able to assist with moving herds away from populated areas
- Train and equip local volunteers on how to safely move muskox herds, to be done as a group for safety purposes
- Open up more hunting opportunities in Game Unit 22C, and open it up to bulls and cows
- Modernized methods of humane chipping, tagging, and tracking of muskoxen to obtain crucial data on their herd movements that will assist in any scientific studies needed to help with the population, as well as to curate a more accurate census. Scientific field testing to ensure the population is healthy and not carrying any latent diseases that could harm or change our ecosystem.
- In the 1970s, the Kellogg Foundation financed an operation in Unalakleet, Alaska by sending approximately 30 muskoxen to start a farm. Over the tenure of the farm's existence, the handlers were able to tend the muskoxen in a successful enclosure to maintain the herd. There were very few reports of the musk ox breaking through their barriers. There are no documented incidents to where any damage or injuries took place outside of the musk ox enclosures to humans, animals, or property. The demise of the farm occurred in the 1980s when the cost of feeding the animals became too high, as all the feed and supplies were shipped via bypass mail.

The remaining herd was successfully relocated to Palmer, Alaska, where they have been able to successfully maintain a large number of muskoxen. The muskoxen in their care receive stress-free handling and monitored ethical husbandry. They are able to focus on qiviut production and educating the public. There is a very large tourism draw to this farm, and they function as a noteworthy 501C non-profit.

We (the residents of Nome and the Bering Strait) would like to have the opportunity to possibly revisit the musk ox farm concept as a productive means to

harvest qiviut, keep the herds contained within ethical enclosure systems, help promote tourism, increase safety, and utilize the animals for their resources in a similar model in addition to forming barriers to keep other muskoxen out of residential areas.

HOME

Would You Be In Favor Of Opening A Musk Ox Hunt Inside Of Nome City Limits?

THU, 10/12/2017 - 5:32PM admin

 Share < 0  Email < 0

Yes



No



Total votes: 42

A 2017 Nome Nugget Poll shows that Nome residents were in favor of hunting inside city limits even back then.

PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY CONCERNED RESIDENTS IN THE NOME REGION:



Muskoxen prevented petitioner Miranda Musich from leaving her house on 12/16/22 - three days after Curtis' death. Her husband, a friend of Curtis', had to go outside to try to get them away from the house because they harass the horses (which are just to the left of the herd) whenever they're on the property, including breaking through electric fencing



Muskoxen herd too close for comfort - submitted by Janice Mixsooke. "This was taken right outside the door we use on a daily basis."

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Previous 4 photos submitted by Kamey Kapp Worland to show the impact of the attack on her dog lot in 2020







The previous 3 photos were submitted by Emerson Conger, who was attacked by muskox in his yard when trying to bring his dogs inside to get away from it. This is one of his dogs. A letter of support submitted by Emerson's father Keith is below









Previous 4 photos submitted by letter-writer Audrey Buie, sharing the devastating last moments with Zeus, and a happier time before his unnecessary death

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The previous 3 photos were submitted by Sharon and Yusuf Rida to show how close they are to where her children play and how they have no issues hanging out in front of people's front doors





Kenny Hughes, who now lives near the DOT/High School area and was a long-time resident of Teller, shared the previous 2 photos and stated, "Way too often I come across this, a musk ox around the corner of my house; often when I'm least expecting it. We can't keep our dogs tied up outside for fear of these beasts wandering through when we are not at home. We can't let our children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren play outside (in extensively manicured yards with swing sets, playhouses, and fences) without immediate supervision for fear of a surprise visit. Do note the mother with young, the most dangerous of all beasts!"



Marcy O'Neil submitted this photo showing a small group of muskoxen preventing her neighbors from being able to leave their house

LETTERS OF SUPPORT:

December 31, 2022

To whom it may concern:

On December 13, 2022, my husband Curtis Worland was attacked and killed by a musk ox while trying to move one of the numerous herds of musk ox that congregate west of town away from our dog lot. It is well known that musk ox will attack dogs unprovoked. This particular herd was less than ¼ mile from our dog lot. He was riding a snowmachine and instead of running away from the sound of the machine, one of the musk ox in the herd instead decided to charge him. He received only one injury – a fatal laceration to his deep femoral artery. He wasn't able to get far away from the ox and his machine, back toward the road, before he bled out.

As Nome residents since 2008/2009 and dog mushers since 2011, Curtis and I have experienced that the need to push musk ox away from our dog lot has increased exponentially. We take the approach of being proactive – attempting to set a boundary in which the musk ox would recognize that they were not wanted or safe, instead of reactive – waiting until an animal was within the yard itself, attacking our dogs and requiring a DLP. On occasion, we would receive assistance from ADFG (from Bill Dunker, who no longer lives here) to “walk” the animals away from our previous dog lot by the AC grocery store where other dog mushers also had teams. The ADFG biologists would fire bean bag rounds and rubber bullets to encourage them to move. Sometimes they would move readily, but a lot of the time they stood their ground and were very reluctant to move. Often times, we would use our side by sides and ATVs in the summer/fall and snowmachines in the winter/spring to move them. On more than one occasion when in the side by side, a musk ox would stand its ground and charge the side by side (which was thankfully enclosed). Most of the time we didn't have a firearm with us because we would speed over from work or home to protect our dogs without grabbing one. These animals have become increasingly aggressive not just toward animals, but also toward humans, and now my husband has died as a result. Residents of Nome have been calling for change and reform regarding musk ox for over a decade, but it keeps falling on deaf ears while the problem continues to escalate.

Curtis was a very intelligent outdoorsman. He was an avid hunter and fisherman. He would have to move musk ox away from our current dog lot (mile 4.5 Teller Road) throughout the entire year on at least a weekly basis. We typically didn't call ADFG every time musk ox were near our dogs because historically, they wouldn't help unless there was what they considered an immediate threat. Again, we maintained a perimeter (usually around ½ mile at the least) and throughout the years have been lucky enough to only have had one musk ox in our dog lot despite having a fence around it, resulting in one dog being wounded that somehow survived. In a recent Nome Nugget article from December 22, 2022, Tony Gorn who is ADFG's Region 5 supervisor told the Nugget that “They spotted 10 groups totaling approximately 125 musk oxen” when searching for which animal may have killed my husband. I emailed Tony Gorn and asked to clarify the area these 125 musk oxen were in. He replied that, “The size/area the 10 groups were in were between Dry Creek just east of Icy View and the Snake River.” This is an area west of Nome that is less than 5 miles. To have this many musk ox observed in such a small area represents just how mismanaged this population is in the Nome area. This number doesn't count those in town, to the north

of Nome, or to the east of Nome. We are inundated. I am now afraid every time I try to run my dog team, fearful that one of the many musk ox near by will be on our trail and attack me or my dogs.

My proposal is this: the musk ox herds within at least a 10 mile radius of Nome need to be drastically reduced (but not eliminated). They need to re-learn proper respect and fear for humans again, as not to feel safe congregating so close to populated areas in and around Nome. To start with, we need an immediate emergency order hunt established where a set number of animals are allowed to be harvested every other month to keep constant pressure on the local herds, reminding them that humans are not their protectors and they need to maintain their distance. In the long term, we need to maintain pressure on the herds to stay away from populated areas in and around Nome by increasing the number of Tier 2 musk ox permits that are allowed each year and include not just bulls, but cows as well. In the meantime, we also need ADFG to establish a task force that will assist the residents of the area in keeping the musk ox out of town and away from populated areas by hazing or moving them whenever they are within a certain distance of homes, dog lots, etc. This has to be a substantial distance however, and I propose a minimum of $\frac{1}{2}$ or 1 mile because if they are allowed any closer, they can pose a definite threat to life and property within a very short period time. ADFG cannot continue to choose to intervene only when there is direct threat (i.e., musk ox in a dog lot, on someone's porch, etc.) but need to join in proactively keeping them a safer distance away.

In conclusion, the gross mismanagement of musk ox in and around Nome needs to end now. A human – my husband – has lost his life as a direct result of this mismanagement. Please hear the pleas of the people of Nome and take steps now to ensure that not another human or canine life is lost.

Respectfully,

Kamey Kapp Worland

**KAWERAK, INC.:**

12/29/2022

REPRESENTING

Brevig Mission

Sitatsaq

Council

Diomedea

Inaliq

Elim

Niviarcaurluq

Gambell

Sivuaq

Golovin

Chinik

King Island

Ugiuvak

Koyuk

Kuuyuk

Mary's Igloo

Qawiarq

Nome Eskimo

Sitnasuak Inuit

Savoonga

Sivungaq

Shaktoolik

Saktuliq

Shishmaref

Qikiqtaq

Solomon

Anjuutaq

St. Michael

Taciq

Stebbins

Tapraq

Teller

Tala

Unalakleet

Uqalaqtiq

Wales

Kinjigin

White Mountain

Igaliuk /

Nutchirviq

TO: Policy Makers, Regulation Makers and Game Managers for Musk Oxen

FR: Melanie Bahnke, Kawerak President *M. Bahnke*

RE: Requesting Implementation of Measures to Reduce Musk Ox Threat to Humans & Pets

In the recent decade, musk ox have become an increasing threat to life and property for residents of the Bering Strait Region communities who have herds near their communities. This threat is not limited to just Nome residents, but extends to people living in Brevig Mission and other communities where they have caused damages such as knocking over people's heating fuel tanks, resulting in the loss of primary heating source and costly repairs.

Unfortunately, people in the region have experienced damages to their property, gravesites of their loved ones, pets that have been injured and killed, and most recently, we lost a contributing member of our society, a public safety officer who was young and in the prime of his life.

On a personal level, on several occasions, I have had to abruptly bring inside, children playing around our family campsite at Cape Nome when musk ox have appeared from out of the blue, coming up over a ditch where they were not visible. I have had them try to attack our two dogs, and also had one attack property, despite my brother firing warning shots to haze it.

The herd numbers continue to increase, and we continue to fear for the lives of our animals and children, who cannot even safely ride their bikes on the bike path near the Teller highway, or even go for a walk near the Nome Public Safety Building without worrying about the possibility of running into them. They have proven to be deadly. If this situation is left as it is, we will only continue to experience more and more musk ox coming into our communities. The animals are more and more brazen, and unless we relocate them or are allowed to dispatch them if they are inside city limits, there will be no deterrence for this continued encroachment into our front yards by these deadly animals. They are just as deadly as bears, which we would not be expected to tolerate roaming throughout our communities.

I implore you to identify solid measures to enact to keep our people, their pets and property safe from these animals. I am concerned that this recent death of one of our citizens will be only the first if this situation is not addressed. Please do what you need to do as Policy Makers, Regulation Makers, and Game Managers to handle this situation. Our Tribal Leaders and elders traditionally were the ones who made decisions about the take of fish and game in our region and what is reasonable and allowable and what measures to take to protect our people. I guarantee this situation would not be as out of hand as it is now if that authority had not been replaced by the current management regimes that are woefully inadequate considering the fish crashes and the current threat to humans posed by musk ox. You have not only the authority to enact game management actions to protect residents of the region, but also the obligation to. Please fulfill your obligation.

KAWERAK, INC.PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.

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Sharon Rida
P.O. Box 1392
Nome, AK 9972
December 29, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Sharon Rida, I am a resident of Nome Alaska for 31 years and for 6 of those years I have owned a home in the Icy View subdivision. In those 6 years I have had a fair share of Muskox encounters, which is something I didn't have to encounter while growing up in Nome. Over the 6 years I have witnessed the heard get progressively aggressive with not only dogs but with people.

One instance that comes to mind is May 2017. I was letting my young male huskie out to relieve himself in our backyard on a lead. I had done a scan of the yard to make sure there wasn't anything around before letting him out. I went to check on him a couple of minutes after I had put him out and what I saw was horrifying. My defenseless dog was hidden in the willows of our property line trying to find cover from an aggressive, charging male muskox. I being 6 months pregnant was horrified and screaming at the muskox trying to get it to move on. I waved a broom threw what I could at it but that did not work. The muskox continued to charge my dog and myself on my porch, I thought it was going to break through my porch railing, it was that angry. Lucky my dog was smart, and he quickly got out of his harness and ran to the front of the house and waited under the car until it was safe for me to open the front door to let him in. In all this chaos I had called 911 to let them know my dog was being attacked. The wildlife Troopers were first to show but couldn't find me in the back yard, Fish & Game didn't arrive until much later and got my report and moved on to find the lone Muskox.

After that incident I have been terrified to walk out my door in the months that I'm supposed to enjoy the most, summer. It's even more terrifying because I have a child who is Autistic. She isn't as aware of dangers as a neurotypical kid and not from her father and I's lack of trying. She hasn't fully formed words and is still considered non-verbal so I don't know what she would do if she walked out our front door and came upon a muskox. We've been told to build a fence for our yard but as anyone knows it's expensive to build in rural Alaska. We are a one income family and resources are limited and the manpower we would need for a fence.

I would like to see our Fish and Game take a bigger role in corralling these muskoxen. More than just showing up and talking thinking they will just go away. These animals are less scarred of humans and are far more aggressive than years past. My family deserves safety around our home, and to enjoy our community without fear of muskox charging out of nowhere.

Sincerely,

Sharon A. Rida

December 2022

To the Policy Makers and managers of Western Alaska Musk Oxen

I have lived in, played in, and served in this region for 38 years. I am a retired school teacher and sports coach who worked for the Bering Strait and Nome Public School Systems. I am an avid outdoorsman, dog musher, skijorer, and wilderness guide. In the not-too-distant past, when my family and friends visited, I would tell them we would most likely see moose, reindeer, and possibly bears. But it would be doubtful to see Musk Oxen.

Then, about 15 years ago, musk oxen began coming to us. Right up to us! In our yards, in fact.

I lived safely in the Icy View neighborhood for ten years or more. But since the late 2000s, the musk oxen have been harassing our dogs every year in my backyard lot. I am lucky; only two have been injured. Other people can report far worse!! One musk ox, however, struck my son as he was trying to protect our animals.

Many reports are on file with AKF&G, the state troopers, and the Nome Police Department of me calling in to report threatening musk oxen (unless they have conveniently eliminated them). One encounter with Fish and Game a few years back is the perfect testimony to the many frustrating responses I have gotten from those agencies. One day, we had a musk ox trying to kill our dogs - again. In the process, it charged me several times. Finally, the management official came after I got all five dogs safely to my front deck. As this animal was lying in my backyard, I insisted it be put down. The official said he would not do that because "it no longer posed a threat." I asked him why I couldn't safely bring my dogs back to their spots if the musk ox did not pose a threat.

This official then worked to remove this animal from my yard. However, the animal left at full gallop. It crossed the street and entered a neighbor's yard. Thankfully, none of the many kids that play there were struck. (We, by the way, have 15 children under the age of 12 on our street.) Nevertheless, the official followed the animal to the tundra behind my neighbor's house, where it turned and charged the F&G official. He promptly shot the animal. I was appalled that this safety officer would not put the animal down to protect me, my property, my animals, or my neighbors but would shoot the musk ox only to defend himself.

Two summers ago, I had a conversation with the same official. I felt threatened by the exchange. He told me that unless 1) I put up a fence around my dogs and 2) I cut down every blade of brush on my lot, that he would testify against me in court if I performed a Defense of Life and Property.

I am not shy about saying this is not a game management problem but a game mismanagement problem. In my retirement years, I have done extensive research about Western Alaska. Incredibly, I have only found one musk ox reference in all the many books I've read. So, this animal was not "re-introduced" it was INTRODUCED. Also, a F&G official admitted to me that the Native people of this region were not consulted before this species was introduced. This type of behavior is not surprising to me. In my research, I do find plenty of incidents when outside agencies have unethically taken advantage of the Native people and their lands.

I take great offense at seeing quotes by F&G officials that use the word HAZE. By all accounts, this word has a negative connotation that leads to the idea that musk oxen are being mistreated and put in harm's way. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The citizens of Nome, including Curtis Worland, have only been trying to protect their property and animals. We are not hazing any animals.

I have, and still am, insisting on a policy (AT THE VERY MINIMUM) that any animal that 1) charges a human, 2) charges any animal, 3) kills an animal, or 4) damages property be immediately put down. But most of all, if any animal causes death to a human, it must be put down immediately. (there are plenty of disadvantaged people in Nome who could benefit from the meat. The official told me musk oxen were "subsistence animals.") So, I will say that I am flabbergasted to read when State wildlife troopers and AK F&G officials said they "will determine if the animal will be killed" after Curtis was struck.

I have changed how I ride my bike in the mountains around Nome and walk around Dry Creek and Anvil Creek. I am now carrying a sidearm, and will, in the future, protect myself and my dogs without hesitation. I take great offense at a recent quote I read in the Nome Nugget. One of the F&G employees reported that people should not protect themselves against these animals because it was unsafe to do so in city limits. While I agree that there are dangers, this is yet another way of Fish and Game placing the burden of public safety on the citizens rather than taking responsibility themselves.

Recently my daughter and I were recreating well outside of Nome. When a group of about 12 musk oxen saw us from at least ¼ mile away, they ran hard in the opposite direction. While kayaking in the Imuruk Basin a few years back, we witnessed a group of musk oxen circle around their young ones when we passed them on the Kuzitrin River. In both instances, she said, "look, Dad, those musk oxen are behaving like musk oxen." Because F&G has allowed many generations of young musk oxen to grow up in the **protected refuge** they have created, these now **semi-domesticated animals no longer display their normal, wild behaviors**.

I have been quoted as saying, "what will it take for the state to properly manage the animals they introduced - for a child to be killed?" Now that we have had a human killed, I am saddened to hear read in the media that the state is still not accepting responsibility for protecting our citizens.

The people of Nome, especially Curtis Worland's family, deserve a much better response from our wildlife agencies and our city government.

A continued objector to the mismanagement of the musk oxen around Nome,

Keith William Conger

Nome, Alaska resident since 1998

Seward Peninsula resident since 1984

My name is Audrey Buie. I am 28 years old, I was born and raised in Nome, Alaska. I suffer from depression, anxiety and PTSD but was able to cope with these conditions through the companionship of my 11-year-old Doberman, Zeus. Zeus was my protector, security, companion, and more than anything MY FAMILY for so long. On August 24th, 2022, Zeus was taken outside ON A LEASH, ON OUR PROPERTY, to use the potty as normal. There was a lone musk ox on our property behind our shop that was not seen until it was too late. Zeus was gored by the musk ox and suffered two puncture wounds, one to his common carotid artery and one to his left lung. He was still alive while we quickly loaded him into the vehicle to seek emergency care at Nome's daycare/pet boarding and veterinary care facility that he regularly attended, known as "The Animal House." My mother, Tracey Buie, drove the vehicle while I sat in the back seat with Zeus, with one thumb in the artery and the other near his lung in an attempt to stop the bleeding and seal the lung. The drive was 2 minutes long but felt like an eternity. Upon arrival at The Animal House, Sandra Rowe (owner of The Animal House) and Leesa Jones, both of whom are Vet Techs, and have cared for Zeus on a daily basis while I was at work, carried Zeus inside. We brought him to the back where exams are normally performed and called Gill, the Veterinarian that was out of state at the time as we do not have a Veterinarian in Nome on a regular basis. We laid Zeus on the floor, he was still alive as we tried to figure out what we could possibly do to save him. The blood from his punctured artery quickly filled his left lung while he suffered in pain and was scared, yet he remained completely calm as he always had while receiving care in the past. His gums slowly began to turn from pink to gray as he suffered from lack of oxygen. In just over 20 minutes we had exhausted all options and in the end there was nothing we could do. My mom quickly went home to get my dad and Zeus' favorite stuffed hedgehog and his blanket that he slept with every night. Sandra and Leesa both continued to hold pressure on his wounds and care for him while I laid on the floor with him, covered in his blood, holding him, begging him not to go, it was not his time to leave me. I laid as closely as possible to him, holding his face while he helplessly looked into my eyes as I tried to comfort him. I repeated to him over and over, "Mommy is right here, we're just going to take a nap," since he loved to take naps. My parent's arrived at The Animal House within a matter of minutes to say goodbye to our so very loved family member and to help comfort him while he slowly, painfully, and so unfairly slipped away from us too soon.

Continuously, we have said there needs to be a safe, respectful change, "next time it will be a human," and recently, so very tragically, this came true in our hometown of Nome.

I am crying while I share this painful memory with you in hopes that we can make a safe change together as the strong, caring, and loving Alaskans that we are and ALWAYS, stick together. I love Alaska, I love and respect our wildlife, and have always been vigilant and maintained a safe distance from them and respected their boundaries as we all should.

I am not only asking, praying, or hoping for a change but begging you. Please help us find a way to keep our community safe, together.

If there is anything I can do to help, plan, or assist with ideas or the implantation of a safe and fair change for our people and wildlife, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I have attached pictures to this email to bring awareness to this ongoing situation AND share with you the love and joy that Zeus radiated. I was blessed to be his mom. I cry every day as my arms ache to hold him; my bed is cold without him, and my home and heart are empty without him.

If our love could have saved him, he would have lived forever.

Respectfully and Sincerely,

Audrey Buie

(907) 304-2255

To Whom It May Concern:

In addition to the letter and information composed by Miranda Musich and myself, along with the help of the Nome community and beyond- I am writing this letter to give my personal testimony regarding my and my family's experiences with muskox. I will start with myself. When I first arrived in Nome in November of 2006, I did not catch my first glimpse of this animal until the following summer. A friend and I drove around for miles on 4-wheelers down the main highway leading out of town. Word had gotten out that muskoxen were nearby, and there was a lot of excitement in town because, at the time, it was a rare sight.

I did not see another muskox until the spring of 2010. We live off the Nome-teller Highway and have vast spaces between my neighbors for which the musk ox roam very frequently and utilize our homes as a herd safety point to graze in the tundra behind our homes. In August of 2012, a lone bull muskox gored my German Shepard, Cole. He was tethered to his outside doghouse for a brief period so I could allow him to potty. I was folding laundry when I heard animals fighting behind my house. I rushed to the back door, and my smaller dog, Wilson, ran inside frantically, obviously terrified. When looking out the back door, I saw a large, lone bull musk ox standing in the exact spot where I expected to find my dog. Cole was nowhere in sight, but his chain lay on the ground with his collar still latched to it. My friend next door witnessed the whole encounter, and she rushed over to help as I still could not find my dog. The musk ox stayed firmly in place as I yelled to get it to move. I banged firewood against the back deck to shoo him away, but he did not budge. My neighbor arrived, and I grabbed the nearest loaded firearm I could find, as I was in a frenzy to get this animal off my property as I could not find my dog. I am well aware of the laws and regulations against discharging a firearm within city limits. In defense of life and property, I used my best judgment and fired three rounds with a 17HMR rifle. I am a US Army Veteran with vast experience handling multiple types of firearms, as well as an accomplished hunter. With each round, the musk ox moved away by a few mere yards. By the time the police arrived at my home, the musk ox had finally slipped away like a ghost into the willows. The Nome Police, who responded, were very empathetic. Upon their arrival, I was in total shock and very shaky, and in tears. The police were able to locate my dog for me as I was too frightened to leave my property. My friend was able to drive Cole and me to see our late veterinarian, Dr. Derrick Leedy. We got there at the right time, and Dr. Leedy was able to repair Cole's wounds and give him antibiotics and pain medication. I believe with all my heart that we were only able to save his life because we had access to veterinary medicine. My husband and daughter were out of town, and at the time, I was weak with fatigue after recovering from surgery.

Where we live in the Martinsonville subdivision, the muskoxen are constantly in our yard, grazing in the tundra behind our property in between our neighbor's home in the subdivision. It is always very concerning to leave my front door, especially when it comes to needing to take my dogs outside to do their business and get their exercise. We have had several experiences with muskox rutting and fighting on our property and destroying our wood piles. There also have been several occasions where I could not leave my home to go to work or was late because the muskoxen were in my driveway and I could not access my car safely. I have two dogs now, and I am always very worried for all of our safety whenever we leave the house during the spring, summer, and fall months.

Shortly after my encounter in 2012, I self-reported using a firearm to the Nome Police Department, the Alaska State Troopers/Wildlife troopers, and the Alaska Dept of Fish and Game. The wildlife troopers responded to my home, looking for the muskox the next day, but they were unable to find the muskox. I was then to report to fish and game, where I was "educated" on how to properly handle and deal with aggressive muskox and how to get them off my property. Examples that were given to me at the time were to throw firewood logs off my deck or to throw rocks at the muskox in order to get them to leave my property. I was instructed not to use my firearms if necessary and to use alternative means in the future. I told fish and game at the time that I did not feel comfortable throwing things at an already angry animal that had just angrily attacked my dog. I felt completely useless and defeated leaving ADFG. I felt as if my experience and concerns were not taken seriously. I had just gone through a horribly traumatic experience, and my dog was seriously injured. Leaving with a sense that my concerns were more or less a nuisance to ADFG was incredibly defeating.

Over the last 5+ years, the muskoxen are staying longer in town. They stay for longer durations and also for longer parts of the year. As it gets dark in the fall, it is almost impossible to see them if they are crossing the road, and on numerous occasions, I have almost hit them while driving. I cannot imagine the impact of injury or even death if a vehicle hit a muskox driving 50 MPH on our highway at night.

Now our worse fears have become a reality. My dear friend, Dr. Kamey Kapp, is a widow. She lost her 36-year-old husband in the prime of his life. My husband (and also myself) lost a great friend, and our community is dimmer now that he is no longer with us. My husband has to haze musk ox off our property often, and I am terrified for his safety.

I would like to close by saying that I absolutely love muskox. They are fascinating creatures, and it is a wonder to witness a prehistoric beast with your own eyes. I have spent hours watching them graze, photographing them, painting them, and picking their qiviut. I have had the privilege of being able to eat foods made with musk ox meats.

Every spring is exciting anticipation to see how many new babies are in the herds. But I know firsthand how dangerous these animals are. I am not normally a fearful person. I am an avid wildlife and animal lover and have to exercise great restraint in keeping a safe distance from wildlife. But I don't have that option anymore. The wildlife is not keeping a respectful and naturally fearful and safe distance from my family, neighbors, animals, and friends. I don't want the musk ox to permanently go away, but I definitely would like to see them in their natural habitat- safely away from residential areas with animals and children.

I implore that you hear our stories. I beg that you hear our valid concerns for safety so that we can look back and know that we made real change for our communities and that the death of Curtis Worland was not in vain. As part of a committee of citizens who are dedicated to making this happen, I extend to you all my knowledge and willingness to contribute to our musk ox problem.

Thank you for your time,
Sarah Swartz
1670 Nome-Teller HWY
Nome, AK 99762



Nome Kennel Club * PO Box 1892 * Nome, Alaska 99762

nomekennelclub@gmail.com

To Whom It May Concern:

The Nome Kennel Club, established in 1907 and the world's oldest sled dog kennel club, has the mission to promote the historical keeping and use of sled dogs for travel, work and racing; to maintain a trail system for winter use in the Nome area; to maintain shelter cabins in the Nome area, and to support responsible sled dog keeping in addition to supporting junior mushing.

While keeping sled dogs in confined areas and properly set up sled dog yards, in and outside of Nome, and using trails in the area, NKC members have increasingly been negatively impacted by the rise in numbers of musk oxen. These animals have learned that humans pose no threat to them and their behavior becomes bolder and bolder. There have been many close encounters between sled dog teams and musk oxen, more than we can recount here. A brief survey amongst former and current NKC members has revealed that over the past few years, there have been at least 11 sled dog deaths due to musk ox goings, and 22 serious, sled-dog-career ending injuries. Mushers gave testimony during a recent Northern Norton Sound Advisory Board meeting and recounted the horrific encounters, the many close calls and the added expense of veterinary emergency care, erecting fences and time spent on hazing musk oxen out of one's yard, each time running the risk of being attacked.

Our friend and fellow musher Curtis Worland died on December 13, 2022 doing just that.

NKC would like to add its voice to the chorus of Nomeites to ask the State of Alaska as the game managers of musk oxen to please take measures to reduce the numbers of musk oxen in Nome proper and the surrounding area of Nome in order to lessen the attacks on our dogs and our people.

Thank you for your time and consideration to set in motion measures that would reduce musk ox attacks and the inherent risk of loss of life – both dog and human.

Sincerely,

BOARD MEMBERS: Jessica Burr Lemaire, Frank Carruthers, Diana Haecker, Drew McCann, Cynthia Barrand

PETITION COMMENTS

Name	City	State	Country	Commented Date	Comment
Sarah Swartz			US	12/20/2022	"We need change. Muskox have killed and maimed so many dogs and now one of our best community members. The powers that be need to do something to allow the residents of the Bering Straits region feel empowered to protect themselves as well as safe to leave their homes."
Karen Wilson	Mccordsville	IN	US	12/20/2022	"In other states, if natural predation does not work, the other options are relocation and euthanasia of nuisance animals (mountain lions, bears, etc). I am wondering what is so different with the musk ox in Nome neighborhoods that gore dogs on leash, and now have done the unthinkable and taken a human life. I am in Nome temporarily and enjoy xc skiing when conditions allow. With the recent tragic goring of a local well versed in musk ox behavior, I will only ski when visibility is good, and I have an idea where the herds MAY be. Please consider options used with other nuisance wild life."
Diana Ellanna	Anchorage	AK	US	12/20/2022	"They killed officer Worlan here in Nome , I was so saddened to hear of his passing . He had a wife and I believe children . Him and his wife were a big part of the community here in Nome , our home ."
Emerson Conger	Nome	AK	US	12/20/2022	"15+ years ago, these animals were not a problem. Due to the negligence of the authorities that are supposed to be responsible for managing wildlife, Nome is now without a wonderful member of the community. And sadly this is something that many have been expecting to happen, and regularly warning the authorities about. I hope that SOPs can be put in place to either repel the herds from communities, or cull the herds that intrude into city limits."
Susan Wolf	Nome	AK	US	12/20/2022	"The Musk Ox in Nome have crossed a line by being allowed to live in town, goring a minimum of 16 dogs to death, and more recently, taking the life of a beloved member of the community. Fish and Game and the Nome Police Dept. have told those with dog lots to walk the gathered Musk Ox out of their lots. This is so extremely dangerous that I have to ask why?! Fish

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					and Game needs to step up and do their job. This has been an ongoing problem for several years and needs a resolution now!"
Donald wleklinski	Terre Haute	IN	US	12/20/2022	"Needs attention."
Jennifer Russell	Nome	AK	US	12/20/2022	"I'm sick of them in and near town killing dogs scaring people and way more to say"
Tyler Ivanoff	Shishmaref	AK	US	12/21/2022	"I'm signing this petition because we also have a Muskox problem here in Shishmaref. Muskox are grazing on berry picking grounds and are often tough to deal with. There are several large herds and are continuing to grow. Getting a ticket to hunt them is difficult because it is often very competitive. There are only 3 state and 3 federal tags per year. We need to control the Muskox population."
Chelsea Hubert	Nome	AK	US	12/21/2022	"The muskox are in my yard everyday in the summer. They come into my yard when my kids are playing outside and are very unsafe. I don't want my kids to be scared to play outside"
Clinton Eaton	Ypsilanti	MI	US	12/21/2022	"Proud to be born here. Protect them!"
CORA HENDERSON	Hackensack	NJ	US	12/22/2022	"This petition is well-written and well- thought-out. Doing what the petition is calling for is obviously what needs to be done. It is a plan of action that must be taken. It seems as if those that govern take pleasure in the death of their constituents. If otherwise, why do they always drag their feet or do nothing when the people present them with problems that need to be solved right away? Problems that risk/are taking people's lives?Time to deal with this real problem."
katie worland	Freedom	IN	US	12/22/2022	"Curtis was my cousin... Hoping some good comes from this tragedy."
David Stettenbenz	Nome		US	12/22/2022	"The time has come to removed these wild animals from the city of Nome. They are dangerous and need a new home"
Jeffrey Smith	Henrico	VA	US	12/22/2022	"My friend's friend and Officer died in Nome from an Ox."
Micah Moore	Nome	AK	US	12/23/2022	"People could be just simply taking a walk and since there is so many willows everywhere you never know when one will just walk up in front of you and get startled and aggressive. Some may just never go away even if you throw rocks near them or make loud noises"
Devin Bodine	Nome	AK	US	12/23/2022	"The musk ox are a danger to humans and pets. My children are afraid to play outside in the very few months of Summer that we

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					have."
Debbie Fruitman	Cinebar	WA	US	12/23/2022	"I visit Nome and I love the people and the town. Safety from Musk Ox are important to your tourism and your people. Take care of your town & people!!!"
Perry Burress	Unalakleet	AK	US	12/23/2022	"Fish and Game need to get off there ass and take care of this issue."
Brent Oesterritter	Nome	AK	US	12/24/2022	"Musk oxen do not belong in cities and people should not be scared to protect their families and animals from threats. I accept the risks of running into dangerous wildlife when I leave town but I've had run ins with dozens of them in town running my dogs and had packs of them chase my dogs through friends yards. They don't run when people or animals are close and they are dangerous when they invade our space. Something needs to change"
Grace Minix	Nome	AK	US	12/28/2022	"I've had near run-ins with these animals within the city limits. Pretty damn scarey especially having grandchildren with me!!!!"
Carol Flammond	Cut Bank	MT	US	12/30/2022	"My Cousins husband was fatally injured"
Gary Samuelson	Prescott	AZ	US	12/30/2022	"Signing this in memory of our lead dog, Bernard, who was brutally eviscerated & murdered by a muskox in front of our Port Rd house in 2014. Several times I herded up to 50 muskox away from my home. It was only a matter of time before a human would be killed. Muskox should be outlawed in Nome city limits & shot in defense of life & property."
Gary Samuelson	Prescott	AZ	US	12/30/2022	"I lived in Nome for 38 years. We are signing this in memory of our lead dog, Bernard, who was brutally eviscerated & murdered by a muskox in front of our house on Port Rd in 2014. Several times I herded up to 50 muskox away from my home. It was only a matter of time before a human would be killed. Muskox should be outlawed in Nome city limits & shot in defense of life & property."
Darcie Holoboff	Yuma	AZ	US	1/1/2023	"Musk ox are wandering the streets of Nome. Dangerous for animals and children."
John Holmen	Houston		US	1/2/2023	"They killed my nephew in nome They need to be kept far away."
Lisa Albert-Konecky	Palmer	AK	US	1/4/2023	"I do not want to see any more people and domesticated animals harmed or killed by wild roaming muskoxen."

PETITION SIGNATURES



As of 1/4/2023

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Reform for
Rural
Alaskan
Muskox
Management

