

Welcome to the Dempster Highway

The Dempster Highway is very important because it is the only road that cuts through the Porcupine Caribou herd's range and makes it easy for hunters to get to the caribou. The vast majority of Canadian caribou harvest comes from the Dempster. Concentrated hunting can increase the conservation and safety concerns.

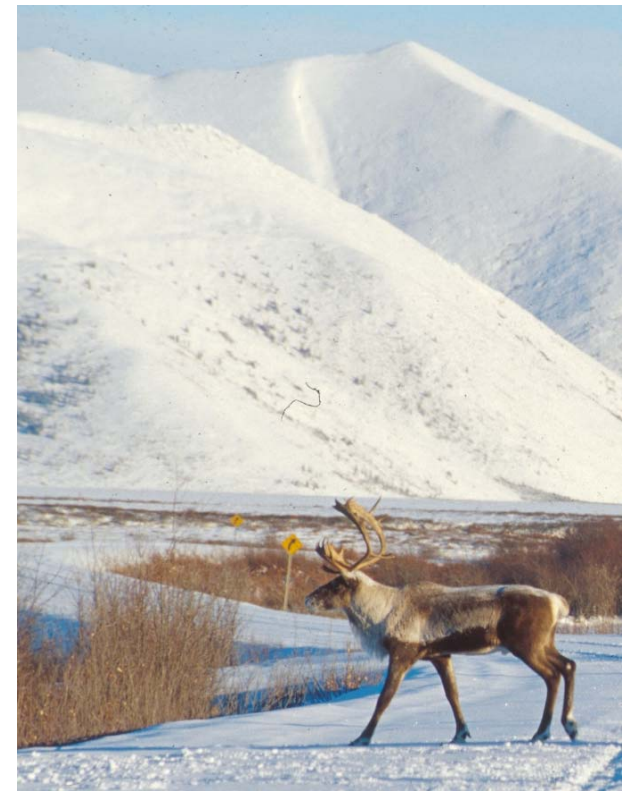
Management of the harvest near the highway involves both laws and hunter awareness. There are laws and regulations that are in place along the Dempster, based on aboriginal land claim agreements, territorial wildlife agencies and the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*. Be sure to check the rules that apply to you before you go hunting. In addition to these laws, the following are provided as Best Practices for harvesters. The community engagement phase undertaken for the Harvest Management Plan demonstrated that most people support the enclosed information.



The PCMB wishes all harvesters a safe and successful hunt



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Think safety first

*Dempster Highway
Caribou Hunting
Best Practices*



Best ways to allow caribou to use the Dempster area

Caribou like to follow trails and the paths of caribou ahead of them. The leaders and leading waves of caribou are important to those caribou farther back in the migration. Allowing lead caribou to cross the highway means there is a better chance for the caribou behind the leaders also coming by. **Your goal should be to reduce the chance of caribou learning to associate the highway with danger.**

Take animals toward the rear of travelling groups. Hunt on the east of the road in the fall and the west in the spring.

Hunters should make one-shot kills away from the highway. Field dress your caribou away from the highway to disperse gut piles.

Caribou follow trails of those before them. Waiting for caribou to walk by on existing trails is a good strategy for hunters.

Slow down when driving in areas with large numbers of caribou.

Best ways to improve hunting success

When caribou are hunted more and more often as the season progresses, they get more 'spooked' and wary of people. This can reduce hunting success, so hunters should behave in ways that reduces disturbance to caribou. **Your goal should be to hunt and retrieve animals quickly.**

Learn from an expert and take a hunter education course.

Caribou are especially disturbed by snowmachines. Use your snowmachine to get to the areas that caribou are using; then make quiet stalks on foot.

Minimize the number of times a group of caribou is approached and shot at per day and per week. Leave the groups near the highway and hunt isolated groups farther away.

Best ways to ensure all hunters are safe

Large numbers of caribou draw large numbers of hunters in the field, especially near the Dempster Highway. This can set up situations where hunters are shooting in close proximity to each other, creating safety concerns. **Your goal should be for all hunters to have a safe hunting experience.**

Be sure to take the time to notice other hunters or caribou around your quarry before shooting.

Remember it is illegal to shoot along or across the travelled portion of the highway

Wear blaze orange so other hunters can see you; caribou are unable to see orange.

Drive safely and park vehicles in safe spots along the road. Remember that when the north end of the highway is open, hunters share the road with large semi-trucks that cannot stop quickly.



Best ways to reduce stress to caribou

Vehicles that chase caribou or frighten them into running long distances can cause a problem called "stress syndrome". Violent exertion causes chemicals to build up in the muscles faster than blood can remove them. The changes this causes in the muscles can bring death to the caribou hours, days or even weeks after the harassment occurred. These chemical changes can also affect the quality of your meat. **Your goal should be to ensure caribou meat is the best quality possible and prevent injury to other caribou.**

Hunters should make one-shot kills from a reasonable distance, and give caribou adequate time and places to regroup.

Snowmachines should be quiet and travel at slow, steady speeds – never used to chase caribou. It is illegal to harass wildlife.

Hunters should get into shooting position without the caribou seeing them.

A wounded animal should be immediately shot again to kill it. A quick death means better meat.

Best ways to protect caribou habitat

Using snowmachines and other off-road vehicles can damage the habitat that the caribou rely on. There are many examples of trails that have been created by these vehicles across the range of the herd. Other off-road vehicles such as four-wheelers and argos can also damage plants. **Your goal should be to act in a manner that minimizes damage to the ground and plants.**

Avoid using snowmachines until the ground is frozen and there is enough snow to protect plants. Opening and closing dates are set under legislation in both the Yukon and NWT.

Use the vehicle in a manner that doesn't kick up plants and create trails across the ground. In severe cases, these trails will never disappear or will start to melt permafrost.