

Why worry?

One of the big advantages to the Porcupine caribou hunt is that it can be a late-season hunt. Caribou fall and winter range in the Yukon and northwestern NWT means a hunting season when hunters are able to use snowmachines.

While most hunters use snowmachines in a responsible manner, we do hear concerns about snowmachines damaging habitat or chasing caribou.

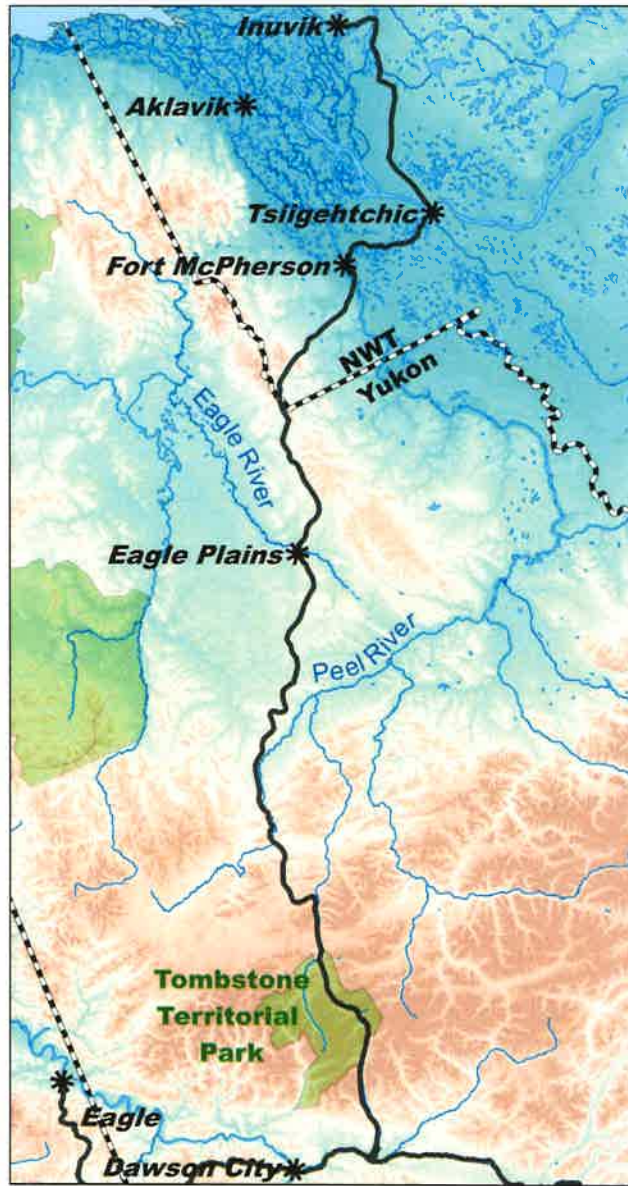
Caribou are especially disturbed by snowmachines. Hunters told us that disturbance by snowmachines is one of the main factors in changing caribou behavior near the Dempster Highway. As well, there is concern that operating a snowmachine before adequate snow cover may cause habitat damage.

Hunters need to demonstrate that they

- Respect the land
- Respect the caribou
- Respect others



The PCMB wishes all harvesters a safe and successful hunt



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Best Practices for Dempster caribou hunters on snowmachines



Respect the land

There are many areas throughout the caribou range where snowmachine and ATV trails can be seen. In very severe cases, these trails will never disappear. While snowmachines allow hunters to more easily move away from roads and other hunters, your goal should be to use your machine in a manner that minimizes damage to the ground and plants.

- Travel at slow steady speeds in locations where the snow is deep and/or soft to avoid damaging plants and creating trails across the ground.
- Spot all downed animals from a ridge-top vantage point, rather than driving back and forth over the area.
- Do not use snowmachines until the ground is frozen and there is enough snow to protect plants.



Snowmachine and ATV trail cuts into the tundra
Photo by L. Gordon, GTC

Respect the caribou

Winter can be a hard season on wildlife. Anything that uses up an animal's energy stresses them during this critical time of the year by decreasing the amount of time they can feed, or forcing them into poorer quality habitats. Your goal should be to prevent caribou from associating the highway with danger.

- Use your snowmachine to get to the areas away from roads and other hunters.
- Field dress the caribou in the field where you shot it and drag caribou back to the truck on sleds to avoid concentrating scents of dead caribou near the highway.
- Take caribou toward the rear of travelling groups.
- Reduce the disturbance to caribou as you hunt. The leaders and leading waves are important to following caribou. Multiple, extended shooting can deflect migrating groups.
- Never chase caribou. Not only is it illegal to harass wildlife, vehicles that chase caribou or frighten them into running long distances can cause a problem called "stress syndrome" which can affect the quality of the meat or even kill caribou. Once a caribou starts to pant with an open mouth, it is too stressed.

Respect others

Many people observing hunting from snowmachines think it is inhumane and unfair. With increased exposure, this may result in reduced public support for subsistence lifestyles, land claims, and traditional knowledge.

- Park vehicles and unload your snowmachine in safe spots along the road.
- Remember it is illegal for any harvester to have a loaded firearm on a snowmobile (live round in the chamber).
- Wear blaze orange so others can see you.
- Be aware of other hunting parties in the area and move away from them, especially those parties hunting on foot or on skis. This reduces the density of hunters in an area and reduces the exposure of caribou to multiple hunting parties.
- When using your machine, ensure you are not inadvertently interrupting a hunting party on foot or skis making a stalk.

