



# ALASKA WILDLIFE TROOPERS INVESTIGATE MASSIVE CARIBOU KILL NEAR POINT HOPE



**Caribou calves try to suckle from the carcasses of their mothers. The dead caribou are among an estimated 120 that were killed near Point Hope sometime between July 4-8. Of that number, at least 60 are believed to have been either partially or wholly wasted. The photos were taken sometime around July 10.**

Media Advisory: July 28, 2008

On July 16, 2008 Alaska Wildlife Troopers in Kotzebue received a report of multiple wasted caribou outside the village of Point Hope. The hunting season is open in the area and residents of the area are allowed to take five caribou per day. On July 19, three Alaska Wildlife Troopers arrived in the village of Point Hope and over the next several days combed an area approximately 25 miles east of the village. They searched near Cape Thompson using ATVs and a state helicopter. The search and subsequent investigation determined that as thousands of caribou traveled through the area, several different hunting parties traveled to the area by ATV on July 4-8 in order to harvest caribou.

During the course of the investigation, troopers located the approximately 120 caribou carcasses, of which 60 were either fully or partially wasted. Troopers have reason to believe that there were many more wasted carcasses, but they were fully scavenged by animals. They also located the remains of many caribou that were adequately salvaged. The carcasses were widely scattered along a 40-mile trail system. Some were found in groups, others were found as singles or pairs and all were located within a short distance of the trail. Investigators agreed that this is by far the worst case of blatant waste they have ever seen.

On July 22, troopers requested and were granted a meeting with several elders in the community of Point Hope. The purpose of the meeting was two fold: 1) the troopers wanted to explain why they were there. 2) they wanted to get the community involved in the process.

During the meeting troopers showed the elders numerous photos of dead, wasted and rotting caribou carcasses, including those of bulls, cows and cows with calves. Some of the pictures showed calves still alive and trying to suckle from their dead mothers.

“The elders seemed to be moved by what they saw and were appalled,” said Alaska Wildlife Trooper Sgt. Scott Quist, who is leading the investigation. “We truly believe that the widespread waste of caribou meat is contrary to acceptable practices and against their tradition of a subsistence lifestyle. We felt that it was imperative to establish open communication with the community through the elders and appealed to them to become involved in the process of identifying those responsible.”

Investigation indicates that the wasted caribou were killed by humans. There was no indication that there were transporters or air-taxis working in the area and almost all of the antlers were left in the field. At this time of year the antlers are not fully developed and are of no trophy value.

Up to five suspects have been identified through Alaska Wildlife Troopers' normal investigation and charges will be forwarded to the Office of Special Prosecutions. Investigators believe there are many additional persons responsible for the widespread waste. At this point, the Alaska Wildlife Troopers are requesting assistance from the public. The Humane Society of the United States is offering a \$2,500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or people responsible for the widespread waste of caribou near Point Hope. Tips can be left at the Alaska Wildlife Safeguard hotline at 1-800-478-3377 or with Alaska Wildlife Troopers in Kotzebue at (907)442-3222.