



SPECIAL FEATURES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MINERAL LICKS



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What are mineral licks?

Mineral licks are unique habitat features important to many wildlife species. They are a place where animals go to lick naturally-occurring deposits of essential mineral nutrients needed for healthy growth. Mineral licks are often areas of high wildlife activity and are sometimes marked by game trails. Some mineral licks are associated with hot and warm springs.

Many species, including moose, caribou and mountain goats, use mineral licks. Mineral licks have a particularly strong influence on habitat use by Dall's sheep and are critical to the well-being of sheep populations. Dall's sheep may travel long distances to mineral licks, and often use the same licks year after year. In summer, the distribution of nursery bands—ewes, yearlings and lambs—is heavily influenced by mineral licks.

Mineral licks in the NWT

Mineral lick locations are considered sensitive information and specific locations are not made public. Instead, densities are reported on a grid, as in the report *Important Wildlife Areas in the Western Northwest Territories*.

MINERAL LICKS

The following attributes have been used to help identify and classify a system of wet mineral licks important for moose in the NWT:

- Wet muddy area or seepage, animal sightings or other physical signs (e.g. pellets, hedged browse, tree rubs, muddy vegetation and bed sites)
- Dense track concentrations
- Exposed mineral soils with clay or organic materials
- Trail convergence
- Trail use (e.g. wear or compaction)
- Evidence of human activities (e.g. bullet casings, hunting blinds and animal remains)

How can we protect mineral licks?

Practice “**Leave No Trace**” principles in the backcountry.

If you think you’ve seen a mineral lick, take a picture of it and send it to Environment and Natural Resources at nwtsoer@gov.nt.ca to help us develop and maintain a comprehensive database on mineral licks in the NWT.

Until more specific information is available, and to minimize the impacts on mineral licks and associated conservation features, developers are asked to observe the following recommended best practices:

- Considering mineral licks’ importance in the healthy growth of many wildlife species, conduct your land use activities in and around mineral licks so as not to disturb these sensitive landforms. Mineral licks have been recognized as extremely sensitive to land disturbance. It is important to protect the area around a mineral lick, and the hydrological system feeding wet mineral licks.
- If you are conducting land use activities, make sure you obtain current information and surveys for mineral licks in your area of interest. Land use activities should not be conducted near a known mineral lick. See the **Northern Land Use Guidelines: Northwest Territories Seismic Operations** or regional Land Use Plans for specific setbacks.
- Monitor the impacts of your land use activities, with a particular focus on long-range impacts, to make sure that mineral licks are not affected.

Where Can I Get More Information?

Visit the Conservation Network Planning **webpage** for other information sheets, reports and most recent maps.

Email Conservation Network Planning at conservationplanning@gov.nt.ca

