

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
89R5765 BEE-F

S.B. 1245
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Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Aoudad sheep, originally introduced in West Texas in the 1950s, have since established large and rapidly growing populations across the Trans-Pecos region. This species offers valuable hunting opportunities, but their high reproductive rates and adaptability pose a serious threat to native wildlife.

Aoudad have broader dietary flexibility and occupy the same habitats as the native species, mule deer and desert bighorn sheep, often outcompeting them for limited resources. Additionally, aoudad sheep pose a significant health risk to these native species as they carry *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M. ovi.), a pneumonia-causing bacteria. Desert bighorn sheep in particular have contracted these infections, resulting in a rapid decrease of the native population. The Borderlands Research Institute along with partnering agencies found that this bacteria has resulted in the mortality of at least half of the desert bighorn sheep population since 2019.

Aoudad sheep continue to face a significant risk and expanding the regulation of hunting aoudad sheep can help mitigate this risk. To protect native species and the population of desert bighorn sheep, S.B. 1245 will amend Section 43.1075 of the Parks and Wildlife Code to include "aoudad sheep." This bill will seek to address the rapidly growing population of aoudads by allowing landowners or their authorized agent to contract a hunter or observer to use a helicopter for the aoudad's removal.

As proposed, S.B. 1245 amends current law relating to the taking of certain aoudad sheep by using a helicopter.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission in SECTION 2 of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 43.1075, Parks and Wildlife Code, to authorize a qualified landowner or landowner's agent, as determined by Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission (TPWC) rule, to contract to participate as a hunter or observer in using a helicopter to take certain depredating species, including aoudad sheep, under the authority of a permit issued under Chapter 43 (Special Licenses and Permits) and to make nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Requires TPWC, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, to adopt or amend rules as necessary to implement the change in law made by this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2025.