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TAPS employees rescue baby musk ox

Alyeska Technician Dave Edgar pictured holding the abandoned calf.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – In early May, travelers on Alaska’s Dalton Highway encountered a heart-wrenching sight: A baby musk ox, huddled against an Alyeska fence between pump stations 2 and 3, apparently abandoned.

Although eager to help, TAPS personnel are not allowed to interfere with wildlife in any manner. Distressed wildlife can, however, receive assistance with authorization from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. In this instance, the department would not authorize a rescue unless a home for the abandoned calf could be found.

Over the next two days, as the calf grew weaker and clearly struggled to stay alive, TAPS personnel scrambled to get the authorization needed to intervene.

On May 15, they got the OK from Fish and Game to collect and stabilize the female calf and ship her to the Large Animal Research (LAR) Station in Fairbanks. Alyeska personnel immediately leaped into action.



Luckily, the Alyeska people on shift at the time consisted of individuals uniquely qualified to perform triage on the dehydrated and scared calf. There was Technician Dave Edgar, who paints musk oxen in his spare time and regularly displays artwork in the Pump Station 4 dining hall. Mechanic TJ Lefebvre grew up on a Montana ranch and knows all about caring for small critters like the musk ox calf. Medic Jamie Newlon is adept at administering subcutaneous fluids – critical IVs that can help weakened wildlife. Best of all, Kate Montgomery, the environmental coordinator on duty at Pump Station 1, is an experienced veterinarian.

The “PS1 ICU rescue team” (as they came to be known) also included Lou Zelinski, David Ratky, Bob Stirling and Gina Kalloch.

The Alyeska team got to work stabilizing the calf and getting it to Pump Station 1. On May 16, the calf was flown to Fairbanks.

The LAR station veterinarian reported the calf in good shape and more vigorous than expected, thanks to the excellent life-saving support she received from the TAPS team.

“We were uniquely situated to help,” Montgomery said. “While rescuing baby musk ox is not our core business, taking action was the right thing to do. Hopefully, our actions will contribute to increased knowledge about the musk ox species, our North Slope neighbors.”

Please note: Fish & Game does not generally issue permits to “Good Samaritans” to rescue abandoned animals. F&G Area Biologist Beth Lenart said one of the reasons she issued the permit, in addition to

having identified a receiving home for the calf, was that Alyeska has the medical, veterinary, and logistical resources to effect a successful rescue.

About Alyeska

Alyeska operates the 800-mile Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), which runs from Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope south to the Port of Valdez, the northernmost ice-free port in the United States. The pipeline crosses three mountain ranges and 34 major rivers and streams. Alyeska operates out of Anchorage, Fairbanks and Valdez and at various facilities along the line. Alyeska was created to construct, operate, and maintain TAPS for the owner companies. The current TAPS owners are BP Pipelines (Alaska), ConocoPhillips Transportation Alaska, ExxonMobil Pipeline Company, Unocal Pipeline Company, and Koch Alaska Pipeline Company.

For more information, visit www.alyeska-pipe.com, or follow Alyeska on Facebook or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlyeskaPipeline.

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