



North Slope Borough
Department of Wildlife Management
 P.O. Box 69, Barrow, Alaska 99723
 For more information, call 907-852-0350

Studying Polar Bears

How might this impact subsistence hunting?

Why study Polar Bears?

Polar bears are studied for several reasons, including to:

- Estimate population size to ensure safe harvest levels
- Monitor health of population
- Determine distribution and habitat use

Information gathered is important for:

- Understanding impacts from global climate change
- Mitigating disturbance by industrial development

Each year, 1-2% of the total population of about 1,500 polar bears in the Southern Beaufort Sea and an estimated 2,000 bears in the Chukchi Sea are collared or tagged.



*Polar bear off of the coast of Alaska
 Photo credit: Regehr, USGS*

How to tell if a harvested Polar Bear has been captured?

All polar bears that have been captured will have identifying marks:

- **Lip tattoo:** all bears
- **Ear tags:** all bears, but tags can pull out
- **GPS radiocollars:** females and juveniles only
- **GPS ear tag or glued tag:** some bears

The best way to determine if a polar bear has been handled is to lift the upper lip and look for a green number tattooed on the inside of the upper lip.



USGS photo 01 nov 1999

Tattooing a number onto the upper lip on a polar bear

What is Telazol?

Telazol® (tiletamine-zolazepam) is the drug used to immobilize polar bears when they are captured, and it is broken down quickly in polar bears:

- Most of the drug disappears after 24 hours
- Few break-down products (metabolites) can be found after 11 days
- State Veterinarians suggest meat is safe for consumption after 14 days in bears
- 30 days is a conservative estimate for when meat is safe for consumption
- To find out when a bear was last drugged call **USFWS: 1-800-362-5148**

Reference: Semple *et al.* 2000. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases*. 36(4): 653-62

Harvest a polar bear with an ear tag, collar, or lip tattoo?

Call Jason Herreman at **NSB Department of Wildlife Management (852-0350)** to find out the date when the bear was captured.



*Subsistence hunters scraping a polar bear hide
 Photo credit: NSB-DWM*