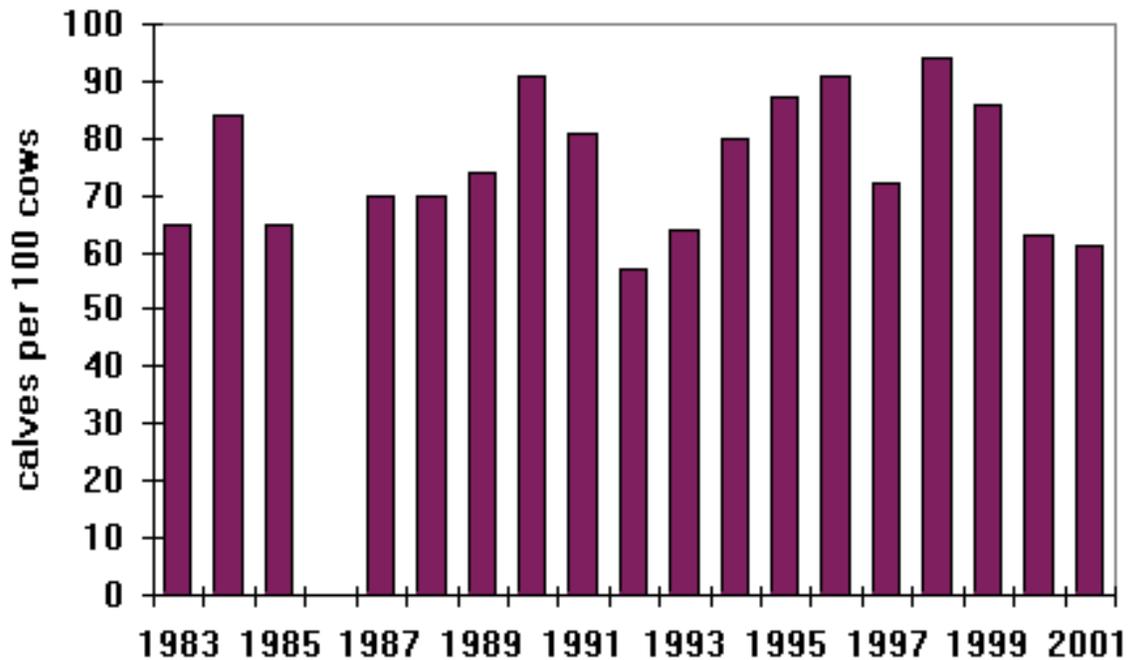


Porcupine Caribou Herd Calf Survival Rate

June Calf Survival



Data Source: Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

What is happening?

- This graph shows the variation in calf survival during June, a critical period shortly after birth. The number of calves surviving their first few weeks varies from year to year.
- In 2011 early calf survival was 48% and is the lowest rate recorded for this time series. By comparison, in 2010 researchers estimated 76% of calves survived, slightly above the long term average of 74%.
- Early calf survival had been low in 2009 as well (56%). In that year pregnancy rates were about average so the loss of calves suggests the quality of calves was poor or conditions such as weather or the number of predators were worse than usual.

Why is it happening?

- In some years, when most calving occurred in Canada (e.g. 2000 and 2009), the birth rate has been low. This might be caused by loss of calves when the herd continues to move west into Alaska and crosses several major rivers. In 2007, calving occurred in Canada but the survival rate was very high (83%). Calving occurred a few days earlier in 2007 so calves may have been better able to travel. As well, pregnant cows may have been in

better shape to begin with because the wintering range (in 2006-07) occurred further north than some years so the spring migration was short.

Why is it important?

- The early calf survival rate is an important indicator of how the population may grow in future. In years when the death rate of calves is high there will be limited opportunities for population growth.

Technical Notes

- In early June radio-collared caribou cows are checked for signs of a successful pregnancy (i.e. calf at heel). These females are then re-visited in late June to see how many still have calves alive.
- This measure does not reflect the death of calves that are lost at birth as only successful cows with calves are followed later in June.
- No information is available for 2004 or 2012 because bad weather prevented flying. In 2013 the post-calving herds were so densely packed that individual cows could not be checked to see if they had calves with them.

See also:

- Caribou Population
- Caribou Birth Rate
- Caribou Calving Habitat Use

Off-site: Porcupine Caribou Herd

Data added: March 16, 2014.