

Moose (*Alces alces*)



Taxonomy:

Family Cervidae. There are 4 recognized subspecies, including the regional subspecies *Alces alces shirasi*.

Description:

The largest member of the deer family, moose have large, thick bodies with relatively thin, but long, legs and virtually no tail. They had a long head, large ears and large cartilaginous nose and flexible upper lip. There is a hanging dewlap of skin near the throat. Moose are dark brown to almost black. Males have large, palmate antlers that are shed and regrown annually.

Total length: 2.5-3.2 m (males) 2.4-3.1 m (females); Tail length: 80-120 mm; Weight: 360-600 kg (males) 270-400 kg (females)



Distribution:

Moose are found throughout Alaska and Canada. Their range also extends southward through the Rocky Mountains into northern Utah as well as parts of the northeastern United States. Moose are locally common along the Wasatch Front.

Ecology and Diet:

Moose are well adapted to live in environments with cold, snowy winters. In fact, they are limited to regions where temperatures do not exceed 80° F for long periods because they do not release heat well

and often times will cool off in ponds and lakes to avoid overheating. They consume large quantities of food: up to 20 kg a day of selected plants including leaves off trees and shrubs, woody twigs, and aquatic plants.

Life History:

Mating occurs in late September or early October and after an 8-month gestation period the calves are usually born in late May or early June. It is common for only one calf to be born per female but twins can occur when nutrition is favorable. Calves stay with their mother for a year and are very vulnerable during that time; about half of the calves born are killed by wolves or bears. After one year the mother drives the yearling off in order to reproduce again and the calves do not reach physical and sexual maturity until 4-5 years of age.

Reference: Peterson, 1999.