

The Moose



The moose, found in the northern parts of North America, is the largest member of the deer family. It is very closely related to the Eurasian Elk, which can be found in Northern Europe and Northern Asia. There is some debate as to whether the moose and the Eurasian Elk are the same animal but there is no denying that they are very similar. The moose is a tall animal, with a hump on its shoulders, a short tail, long slim legs and large hooves. These hooves act like snow shoes in the snow and also help to spread the animal's weight in soft or boggy ground. The moose's face is long and most have a flap of skin underneath the throat, which is called a bell. Though the moose has very poor eyesight, it has good hearing and sense of smell.

The males and females are of similar size but the males are much heavier. The male also grows large, flat antlers to attract females and to ward off attacks from other males and predators, such as bears and wolves. These antlers grow from early spring until late autumn but fall off before winter. New and bigger ones will grow back the following year.

Despite being such big animals, moose can move very fast - up to 56 kph/32 mph. Moose like being in the water and are good swimmers. They can often be seen paddling and swimming in the water for miles at a time.

Moose are herbivores and their diet consists of grass, plants, flowers, twigs, leaves and bark.

Scientific Name: *Alces americanus*
Irish: Mús



A male moose

The Family

A male moose is called a **bull**. A female is called a **cow** and their young is a **calf**. The males are solitary animals and only gather during the mating season. Females have one or two calves in the spring and these calves will stay with their mother until the following year. The moose have a lifespan of 15-20 years.



A young moose

FACT FILE

Length: 2.4 to 3.2 m
Height to shoulder: 1.8 to 2.1 m
Weight: Males - 360 to 600 kg; Females - 270 to 400 kg.
Colour: Brownish grey to reddish brown to dusty black. Lighter coloured legs.
Food: Grass, plants, flowers, twigs, leaves & bark.
Habitat: In woods and close to lakes, swamps and other sources of water.
Range: Moose - Alaska, Canada, Northern USA.
Eurasian Elk - Northern Europe & Northern Asia.



A female moose

Images courtesy of Alan D Wilson www.naturespicsonline.com