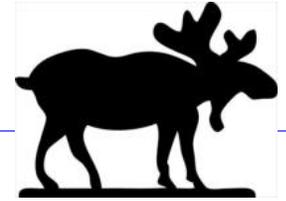


LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

Humane, Effective Solutions to Human-Wildlife Conflicts

A Program of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals



Moose

In cities, suburbs, and small towns across Massachusetts, people are noticing a change in their neighborhoods. Some think it's good. Some think it's bad. But everybody seems to be talking about it: more wild animals are making their homes in and around people's yards and houses, in parks and playgrounds, in business developments, even right on Main Street.

General Information

Native American Algonquins called them moose, meaning "eater of twigs". It's hard to believe that the largest wild animal in North America could grow to an average of 1,000 pounds and stand taller than most humans - 6 feet at the shoulder - on a diet of leaves, twigs, aquatic plants, and tree buds. Eating 40 - 60 pounds a day does, however, sustain them and they accomplish this without upper incisors; they strip off bark rather than cutting it.

Male moose, known as bulls, are larger than the females, known as cows, and are further distinguished by dark brown or black muzzles and large antlers that can weigh up to 60 pounds. Antlers begin to grow in the early spring and mature by late summer or early fall. During the winter, mature bulls lose their antlers completely, while young bulls may keep their smaller spikes into early spring. Cows who do not have antlers have a light brown face and a patch of white fur beneath their tail. The distinctive flap of

skin and long hair that hangs from a moose's throat is called the bell, and is typically less noticeable in cows.

Bulls and cows stay on the move during mating season, or rut, which begins in mid-September and lasts about 1 month. Their home range varies from 5 to more than 50 square miles, the latter during rut.

Bulls do not breed until they're 5 years old, while cows begin at 1.5 years and usually have 1 calf by age 2. Once a cow reaches 4, it's common for her to have twins. 20-25 pound calves are born in late May or early June, and by Thanksgiving they're up to 20 times heavier. Cows are extremely protective of their calves and have been known to kill wolves and black bear while defending their young. Moose can live more than twenty years, although many die earlier due to predation, disease, human hunters and automobile accidents.

Moose do not see distant objects well, but compensate with keen hearing and a good sense of smell.

Possible Conflicts and Solutions

The most common concern people have about moose is motor vehicle collisions with moose. Given the moose's enormous size and the automobile's high speed, collisions between the two are indeed

dangerous and can result in both human and animal injuries and deaths. Many solutions have already been proven effective at preventing collisions, and new technologies are being developed.

The following are suggestions for staying safe:

- Take moose-crossing signs seriously. They're erected in high accident areas.
- Don't speed. Excessive speed increases the risk of serious injury or death.
- Be extra cautious in the fall. Hunters frighten moose and keep them on the move, and mating season for moose is September and October.
- Dim your dashboard lights at night. This increases your visibility on darkened roads.
- Scan roadside edges for moose as you drive, especially at dawn and dusk and from May to October, when moose are more active. Look up - moose are tall.

Encourage your community to take preventative measures by:

- Posting moose-crossing signs in high accident areas.
- Airing public service announcements in fall/spring.

- Reducing speed limits.
- Erecting high fences or extending existing fences bordering major highways.
- Increasing fines for littering and/or enforcing existing laws. Litter attracts animals to roadsides.
- Mandating that all driver education courses include information on collisions with animals and safe driving methods for prevention.
- Keeping current with developing technologies and implementing them when available - wildlife bypasses, laser devices, mirrors, collision avoidance sensors, and new headlight technologies are currently being tested.

Hunting Will Not Prevent Collisions

There is an effort underway to begin a moose hunt in Massachusetts. Moose hunting is currently illegal in Massachusetts.

THE LIVING WITH WILDLIFE MISSION

The MSPCA Living With Wildlife program aims to protect wild species, now and in the future. The program promotes peaceful coexistence between people and wildlife in urban, suburban, and rural Massachusetts communities by helping to resolve human-animal conflicts in a humane, nonlethal, long-term, and cost-effective manner.

Proponents of a moose hunt claim it's necessary for stabilizing the population and preventing car-moose collisions. This is not true. The state of Maine, which celebrates its large moose population, has 2 hunting seasons for moose, yet the population continues to grow.

Due to the fact that between 1995 and 2000 there were 3,983 crashes involving moose, resulting in 15 human deaths and 805 human injuries, public officials in Maine take this issue very seriously, and have studied a myriad of ways to reduce the incidence of moose hit by cars. What they have found is that "educating drivers through

awareness programs was identified as a factor that could most effectively bring a reduction in animal/vehicle crashes" (Maine Working Group Interim Report, p.11). They do not rely on hunting to reduce collisions in Maine, but rather have seen a decline in accidents as they have implemented educational and technological solutions.

For more information about humanely solving human-wildlife conflicts or about the MSPCA's Living With Wildlife program, call (617) 522-7400, visit www.LivingWithWildlife.org, or e-mail LivingWithWildlife@mspca.org.