



### FAST FACTS

**Name:** Moose

**Species name:** *Alces alces*

**Average weight:** Female: 350 kg; Male: 400 kg

**Average length:** 2.4 to 3.2 m

**Life expectancy:** average 8 to 12 years

**Did you know?**

The moose is a powerful swimmer within days of birth.

### PHYSIOLOGY

The moose is the largest member of the deer family, and stands taller at the shoulder than the largest saddle horse. It has long, slim legs with divided, or cloven, hooves that are often more than 18 centimetres long. The moose gets its humped appearance from its deep and incredibly muscled shoulders. It is also low-rumped, has slender hindquarters and a stubby tail. The moose's head is heavy and long, with an overhanging, flexible upper lip. Its ears are slightly smaller than those of a mule. Most moose have something called a bell—a piece of fur-covered skin about 30 centimetres long that hangs from their throats.

A moose's antlers are pale in colour, sometimes almost white. They are used for fighting in the hunting season. It is in the late summer and autumn that a mature bull carries its rack of antlers, which normally span between 120 and 150 centimetres. They begin growing in midsummer and are soft and spongy during that period of growth, with blood vessels running through them. By late August or early September the antlers are fully developed, hard and bony. The formerly soft velvet dries and the bulls rub it off against tree trunks. Adult bulls normally shed their antlers in November, but younger bulls can carry them through until April. Moose can be a variety of colours, ranging from dark brown, almost black, to reddish or greyish brown, with grey or white leg markings, called stockings.

### HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

Moose are powerful swimmers, sometimes diving 5.5 metres or more for plants at the bottom of a lake. Swimming in the water is also a way for them to cool off in the summer, as moose suffer from the heat. They do, however, tolerate cold well. Moose can also travel through practically any terrain. Their long, stilt-like legs make it easy for them to travel over deadfall trees and deep snow. Their large hooves provide support to wade through soft muskeg and snow. Despite the moose's large size and broad antlers, it can travel silently through the forest. The moose's eyesight is poor, but they compensate for it with a good sense of smell and hearing.

### RANGE

Moose live on the margins of lakes, muskegs and streams of the boreal forest, on the rocky, wooded hillsides of the western mountain ranges and now even northward through the transition forest that extends to the open tundra. Moose can be found in Canadian forests from the eastern tip of Newfoundland and Labrador to the border of Alaska. In the wintertime, they occupy forests that have reduced snow levels. Moose are also moving into areas where they were not previously found, like north-central Ontario and the southern part of British Columbia. In the early 1900s, a few pairs of moose were put on the island of Newfoundland and the populations are now quite large.