

Telling the difference between an Elk and a Moose

Moose were introduced into Colorado back in the late 70s and the animals have thrived ever since. Unfortunately over the years there has been a problem with hunters mistaking moose for elk. A hunter who mistakes a bull moose for a bull elk can be fined more than eleven-thousand dollars.

Hunters should really know the difference since the animals are quite different in size, color, antler shape and habits. The species of moose found in Colorado is known as a shiras. While it's the smallest of the four sub-species a mature bull can still weigh twelve hundred pounds, about twice as much as the average bull elk. Moose are dark brown and appear almost black. Elk are a lighter brown with a pale rump.

Moose also have a large rather bulbous nose and a bell under the throat, compared to the narrow snout of an elk. Mature bulls have broad palmated antlers while elk have pointed antlers. A young bull moose might have antlers that haven't flattened out, so hunter's need to be sure of their target.

The Largest member of the deer family, moose have adapted to a variety of habitats. They favor willows along streams and ponds, but they can also be found at higher altitudes in alpine areas. In other words were Elk are found. They act differently however, when approached by humans; typically moose won't flee at the sight of a hunter.

Despite these differences, every hunting season brings a number of illegal moose kills. Circumstances vary from mistaken identity to blatant poaching. A common denominator in many kills is the absence of optical aids, such as binoculars or spotting scopes, to properly identify the species.

The accidental killing of a moose doesn't necessarily lead to prosecution and may not count as part of a hunter's bag limit if the incident is reported promptly and the meat taken care of. A wildlife officer will conduct an investigation to determine the circumstances.

Colorado does offer a limited number of moose hunting licenses.