



Washington Department of
FISH and WILDLIFE

Breeding (rut) in Washington Ungulates

	Deer	Moose	Elk	Big Horned Sheep	Mountain Goats	Pronghorn
Signs of rut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins in Nov. and Dec. • Males (bucks) rub antlers on trees and shrubs. • Bucks urinate and rub facial glands to leave scent. • Bucks compete with other males for the right to breed. • Mature bucks may breed with several females. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins Sept. and Oct. • Bulls (males) rub antlers on trees to remove velvet. • Bulls with largest antlers usually get to mate with cows (females). • When competing for the same cow, bulls will display their antlers and fight each other for the right to mate. • After rut, bulls drop their antlers in the winter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rut begins in early fall and breeding is done by mid-Oct. • Bulls (males) roll in mud or shallow ponds scented with urine and droppings to attract cows (females) and communicate with other bulls. • Bulls challenge each other vocally, emitting high-pitched bugles. • Bulls also spar and fight using their antlers to access females. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs Oct. through Jan. • Older rams (males) with larger horns do most of the breeding. • Rams engage in battles over mating access to ewes (females). • Clashes between rival rams can last for a full day. They smash into each other at speeds of up to 20 miles per hour! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From late Oct. to mid-Dec., billies (males) seek out nannies (females). Rut starts in mid-Oct. though Nov. • Mature billies (5-10 years old) do most of the breeding, with more than one female. • Battles between males sometimes leads to puncture wounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins mid-Sept. through Oct. • Mature males defend a harem. They will warn any encroaching males with loud snorts and wheezing coughs. • If that doesn't work, a fight may erupt. Males will touch horns and twist and shove each other until the weaker male gives up and leaves.
Life History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A doe (female) has 1-2 fawns. • Fawns nurse soon after birth and can walk almost immediately. • Bucks are solitary or form bachelor groups in the spring and summer. • Family groups usually consist of a doe and her fawns. • Groups of several does may be seen together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moose are the most solitary of the deer species. • Cows usually have one calf May-June. • Calves stay with their mothers for a year. • Moose calves can stand up within a day, and they can swim within a couple of weeks. • Cow puts in a lot of time and energy into raising the calf. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cow-calf herds are usually led by older, experienced cows and may include adolescent bulls. • Cows have an 8-9 month pregnancy. • Single spotted calf will be born in late May or early June. • Calves grow quickly and lose their spots by summer's end. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ewes usually give birth to one lamb per year. • Lambs are born between April and June. • Prior to giving birth, ewes isolate themselves in steep rocky areas. • Newborn lambs weigh 8 to 10 pounds and can walk within hours after birth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids (juveniles) are born in late May or early June and closely follow their mothers for the first year. • Nursery groups, made up of nannies and kids, range in size, with some groups up to 70 animals. • By two years old, males or billies begin to leave their nursery groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Females birth 1-2 fawns in May or June. • Fawns can walk within 30 minutes of birth and can outrun a human in a couple of days. • Several females and their youngsters join together in nursery herds along with yearling females.