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Department of
Fish and Game

Division of Wildlife Conservation

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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Challenging Snow Conditions Stress Moose and People

(Fairbanks) – Due to the recent large snowfall and rain events in many parts of Alaska, moose are moving on to roads and trails to escape the deep snow. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has received numerous reports of moose exhibiting aggressive behavior towards people and pets. Moose are stressed from dealing with deep snow and are struggling to find enough easily accessible food during the cold weather. Please exercise extreme caution when encountering moose this winter.

Here is some important advice that you should follow:

Give moose plenty of space – Moose are using roads and trails much more than normal to avoid walking through the deep snow. Be extremely cautious when trying to navigate around moose. If a moose is blocking your road or trail, try to find an alternative route or wait for them to move out of the way. Crowding a moose that is on a slick road surface could cause it to fall and become injured, creating an even bigger problem.

“Everyone should be extra cautious this winter when out on trails walking to school or recreating. Moose will be on the trails and should be given plenty of space. Kids walking to and from school in the dark should be especially careful and should have a backup plan if a moose blocks their way,” said Tony Hollis, Fairbanks Area Wildlife Biologist.

Keep dogs on a leash or under control – Dogs are likely to bark at and chase moose which can cause the moose to exert energy and they may not be able to recover given the current snow levels and cold temperatures. If moose are agitated, they may also charge and attack the dog causing serious injury or death. If you are nearby and a moose attacks your dog the moose may also attack you.

Be very careful trying to scare moose away – Moose do not react to hazing (yelling, shooting, banging pots, etc.) in the same way bears and other wildlife react. A common reaction for a moose is to turn and attack the person or vehicle that is trying to get them to move away. Moose have been known to attack vehicles, snowmachines, and people who are trying to get them to move out of the way or off a road or trail. This added stress to the animals will only contribute to increased mortalities.

Do not feed moose – People may be tempted to try to “help” moose by feeding them, but this will do more harm than good. It doesn’t matter whether the feeding is by hand, or if the food is left out for them. Feeding moose is dangerous and illegal and may put other people at serious risk of injury. Moose become aggressive when defending a food source, and can develop the expectation of being fed.

Many food options that humans have are not compatible with the digestive needs of moose in the winter. During the winter a moose's digestive system is specifically designed to process woody material such as willow, birch, and aspen.

If a moose finds other foods such as hay, other livestock food, or table scraps, they may eat it, but they may not be able to process the food and it could make them sick or kill them.

There is little that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game can do to assist moose in these conditions. Nature is going to have an impact on them.

"This is going to be a very tough winter for moose especially with the deep snow and crust from the rain we had at the end of December. We don't expect many of the calves to survive the winter but are hopeful the adults will be able to make it through," Hollis said.

What should you do if you encounter a moose?

In most cases leaving them alone and giving them plenty of space is the best option. If a moose looks sick or injured but is still able to move around and feed, then its best chance of survival is to leave it alone. If there is an obvious broken leg or other severe injury or if the moose has been laying in the same place for more than 24 hours and can't seem to get up, then call your local ADF&G office to report.

[Contact Information by Location, Alaska Department of Fish and Game](#)

If the moose is causing a public safety issue call your local Alaska State Troopers office.

[Contacts - AST - Alaska Department of Public Safety](#)

For more information about living with moose and dealing with aggressive moose please visit our website.

[Living With Moose, Alaska Department of Fish and Game](#)

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