

## Ungulate Hall of Fame



**MOOSE** (*Alces alces shirasi*)

The moose is dark brown, often with tan legs and muzzle. Its long legs enable it to wade in rivers, swim, and move quickly. It has flat, hand-shaped antlers that it sheds each year. The adult moose has a long dewlap of skin and hair that dangles from its throat. A male (bull) moose can weigh nearly 1,000 pounds and stand more than seven feet at the shoulder.

The moose is a solitary creature, except during the mating season or rut. Its diet consists of aquatic plants, the leaves and twigs of willow, and other woody browse species such as gooseberry and buffalo berry. In Yellowstone, it can be seen in the marshy areas of meadows, lake shores, and along rivers.



**BISON** (*Bison bison*)

The bison is the largest land mammal in North America; a male bull weighs up to 2,000 pounds. It is brown and both sexes have curved horns. The bison's massive hump supports strong muscles that allow it to use its head as a snow plow to reveal forage during the winter. Despite its size, the bison is capable of running at least 30 miles per hour.

The bison eats mainly sedges and grasses, and is an animal of the grasslands. More than 4,000 bison live in and around Yellowstone National Park.



**MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*)**

The mule deer is a small ungulate, weighing no more than 250 pounds and standing less than four feet high at the shoulder. It is reddish brown to gray brown, has a white rump patch with a black-tipped tail, a brown patch on its forehead, and large ears. The male grows antlers each spring and sheds them in late winter.

The mule deer eats shrubs, forbs, grasses, and occasionally, conifers. It is common in Yellowstone, living throughout the park in almost all habitats.



**ELK (*Cervus elaphus*)**

The elk is a large ungulate; the male may weigh 700 pounds and stands five feet high at the shoulder. The elk is light brown with a broad light-colored rump. The bull elk begins growing antlers each spring, only to shed them the following March or April. Cows, calves, and young bulls usually remain in herds year-round.

The elk feeds on grasses, sedges, other herbs and shrubs, the bark of aspen trees, conifer needles, burned bark, and aquatic plants. It is the most abundant large mammal found in Yellowstone National Park.



**HARTEBEEST (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*)**

The hartebeest is a true antelope. This large ungulate varies in color from light tan to reddish brown to deep maroon. There may be blackish markings on the head and legs, while the haunches and rump are usually lighter. Hartebeests have two horns, capping a narrow head. With a long, sloping body and long, slender legs, the hartebeest is built for running. A hartebeest may reach speeds of up to 48 mph.

A hartebeest feeds almost entirely on grass. It is found in medium and tall savannas and the open plains of Africa. Predators include cheetahs, lions, leopards, hyenas, leopards, jackals, hunting dogs, and humans.



**PRONGHORN (*Antilocapra americana*)**

The pronghorn is a small ungulate with a deer-like body. A large adult weighs approximately 125 pounds and stands about three feet high at the shoulder. The pronghorn has a large white rump, a reddish-tan on the back, and white underneath. In addition, the male has a black cheek patch. This animal has pronged horns with sheaths covering permanent bony cores. The sheaths are shed and re-grown every year. Pronghorn are one of the fastest animals in the world—attaining speeds as high as 60 miles per hour and sustaining runs at 45 miles per hour.

The pronghorn is native to North America. It is well adapted to life on the grasslands, eating forbs, grasses, and shrubs, such as sagebrush. It may be seen year-around in Yellowstone National Park near the park's North Entrance.

**Attachment B—Ungulate Dichotomous Key**

**Instructions:**

Examine the photographs, and read the brief descriptions of the six ungulates featured in the Ungulate Hall of Fame. Then separate the animals by determining which of two possible choices best describes each animal. Your goal is to continuing the separation process until each animal is in a category by itself.

**Choices: pronghorn, moose, hartebeest, deer, bison, elk**

1. **Does the animal have flat antlers that are shaped like a hand?**  
NO—go to Question #2  
YES—identify the animal
  
2. **Does the animal live in North America?**  
NO—identify the animal  
YES—go to Question #3
  
3. **Does the animal have a light-colored rump?**  
NO—identify the animal  
YES—go to Question #4
  
4. **Is the ungulate small, i.e. weighing less than 300 pounds at its full growth?**  
NO—identify the animal  
YES—go to Question #5
  
5. **Does the ungulate have horns?**  
NO—identify the animal  
YES—go to Question #6
  
6. **Is the ungulate considered one of the fastest animals in the world?**  
NO—return to Question #5  
YES—identify the animal

**Describe the pronghorn based on the choices you have made.**

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## Teacher Key—Ungulate Dichotomous Key

### Instructions:

Examine the photographs and read the brief descriptions of the six ungulates featured in the Ungulate Hall of Fame. Then separate the animals by determining which of two possible choices best describes each animal. Your goal is to continue the separation process until each animal is in a category by itself.

**Choices: pronghorn, moose, hartebeest, deer, bison, elk**

1. Does the animal have flat antlers that are shaped like a hand?  
NO—go to Question #2  
YES—identify the animal (**moose**)
2. Does the animal live in North America?  
NO—identify the animal (**hartebeest**)  
YES—go to Question #3
3. Does the animal have a light-colored rump?  
NO—identify the animal (**bison**)  
YES—go to Question #4
4. Is the ungulate small, i.e. weighing less than 300 pounds at its adult growth?  
NO—identify the animal (**elk**)  
YES—go to Question #5
5. Does the ungulate have horns?  
NO—identify the animal (**deer**)  
YES—go to Question #6
6. Is the ungulate considered one of the fastest animals in the world?  
NO—return to Question #5  
YES—identify the animal (**pronghorn**)

**The pronghorn is a small animal that lives in North America. It has a light-colored rump, horns, and is considered one of the fastest animals in the world.**