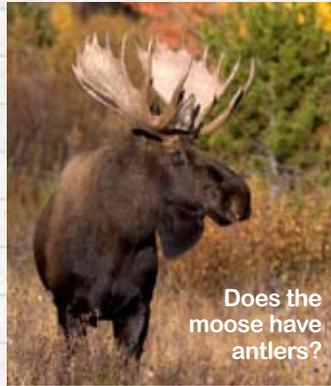


Around Wyoming

Headgear

Have you ever wondered why wildlife have antlers or horns? Antlers and horns come in all shapes and sizes. The bigger the set of headgear, often called racks, the stronger the male is. Females choose a mate based on the size of the rack because it tells them who may have the best set of genes to pass on to their offspring.



Does the moose have antlers?

Mark Gocke

Antlers or Horns?

Animals that have horns are stuck with them for life! The males and some of the females grow them, and they never lose them. Horns are made of a material called keratin, which is the same material that your fingernails and hair are made of. Pronghorn antelope have a type of horn, but they are unusual because they fall off each year. They have a bony core that is covered by a black, keratin cover. It is the keratin cover that falls off.

Antlers differ from horns in several ways. They grow mainly on male animals, and the males “drop” their antlers each year. This means that they lose their antlers. Antlers also branch into many points and are made of a bony matter. While antlers are growing, they are covered in velvet, which is a layer of skin filled with blood vessels. These blood vessels provide vitamins and minerals to help the antlers grow. Once the antlers are finished growing, the velvet dries up and the animals rub it off. Next time you are out hiking, look for trees that animals have rubbed their antlers on. The trees have the bark rubbed off.

Animals that have antlers and horns live in many different habitats, not just forests. A moose likes to be near water and willows, while a pronghorn antelope roams the prairie. But you will find deer and elk hiding in the forest or near its edge.

Do bison have antlers or horns?



Mark Gocke

Look at these pictures of Wyoming wildlife. Can you tell which animals have horns and which have antlers?

This elk has antlers that are in velvet.



Mark Gocke



LuRay Parker

What is unusual about pronghorn antelope headgear?