



institutions for experimentation. Museums are interested in the animals for public display, and some private individuals seek them for domestication. Controlled shooting by wildlife managers or hunters is a last resort."

The stocky, long-haired musk ox is somewhat smaller than a domestic ox. Bulls stand about 3½ feet at the shoulders and weigh up to 900 pounds. The outer hair of the coat is about 20 inches long, sweeping the grass tops as the animal moves. The general color is brownish-black with a lighter saddle mark behind the shoulders. Beneath the extraordinary long hair is a heavy coating of highly valued dark gray wool. The horns sweep downward and forward, then turn upward to form a hook.

Agile and sure-footed on icy terrain, the musk ox thrives where few large ruminants could succeed. Its stout, rounded hoof is adapted to travel on the hard-packed snows, and with powerful strokes of the hoof's sharp edge, the animal cleaves a way to ice-encrusted plants. Its nose--tough as rubber--is also specialized for breaking dwarf willows, lichens and other alpine plants out of their icy bed. The mating season is in August and early September, with one to two calves born in May.

When not disturbed, the herd remains loosely divided into family groups, but all feeding stops when trouble appears. Musk oxen quickly wheel into a protective line or circle to present a solid front to the enemy. In the forefront stand bulls and older cows, shoulder-to-shoulder, and behind them the calves and yearlings. The bulls paw the ground, move their heads menacingly, and bellow. While this formation is effective against the Arctic wolf, it hardly affords a sporting target for an armed human hunter. Wildlife managers are thus reluctant to establish hunting seasons for this once rare animal.



MUSK OXEN