

Feeding hurts, not helps, big game



FEEDING BIG GAME CAN BE HARMFUL TO ANIMALS AND HUMANS

Feeding big game is bad for animals and dangerous for people, for many reasons.

Deer, elk, bighorn sheep and other ungulates are all ruminants—they have complex digestive systems composed of a four-chambered stomach. These animals digest plant-based food through fermentation in their specialized stomachs. Wildlife is well adapted to feed on natural food sources; but food provided by people, such as alfalfa, hay or corn, can kill big game animals.

Every winter wildlife officers around the state pick up many deer, elk, and sheep that died as a result of artificial food sources. Ruminants that ingest grain, corn, or other high carbohydrate foods can develop lactic acidosis or enterotoxaemia. These two conditions are common in ruminants in areas where they are being fed food by people. These two conditions are fatal, usually within 24-72 hours from the time the animal ingests the grain.

Ruminants can develop some tolerance to grain and corn over time, but feeding wildlife has other biological consequences. Salt and mineral blocks, corn, and grain cause animals to gather in close proximity which facilitates disease transmission. Chronic Wasting Disease in deer, elk and moose, as well as pneumonia in sheep can result. These diseases are usually fatal, but take time to develop; consequently, the people feeding wildlife often don't see the negative consequence of their actions.

These are several good reasons for the public not to feed any wild animal. The best thing people can do for wildlife is to ensure access to habitat where they can find their natural diet.

For more information on living with wildlife responsibly, visit: <http://cpw.state.co.us/learn/Pages/LivingwithWildlifeJunkFood.aspx>. To report incidents of feeding or other illegal wildlife activity contact a local Colorado Parks and Wildlife office or officer. If you wish to remain anonymous, contact Operation Game Thief at [877-265-6648](tel:877-265-6648). Rewards may be offered if the information leads to a citation.

Thanks for your cooperation!



Respect our wildlife!

- ▶ Big game animals can die if fed the wrong food. Corn, alfalfa, pet food, and human foods are all harmful.
- ▶ Big game animals that are fed can become demanding and dangerous.
- ▶ Feeding deer, elk and bighorn sheep attracts mountain lions to your property.
- ▶ Feeding big game can concentrate them in an area and lead to the spread of disease including CWD. ▶ Feeding big game is illegal.