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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Moose may look hungry...but you're not helping by feeding them!**

(Anchorage) – The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has received a number of recent reports of presumably well-intentioned people feeding moose in the Anchorage area and the Mat-Su Valley. Feeding moose is illegal and often leads to aggressive behavior.

It doesn't matter whether the feeding is by hand, or if the food is left out for them, it's just as dangerous... and just as illegal. "Moose often appear tame when someone is hand feeding them," said Anchorage Area Wildlife Biologist Dave Battle, "but the next person that moose encounters who doesn't have a handout for them is likely to get kicked. And they will aggressively defend any food pile that is left out for them."

Moose with a history of unprovoked attacks may be shot by Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff or law enforcement to protect public safety. In addition, moose digestive systems don't adjust easily to new foods, so anything people would feed them is probably going to do more harm than good. "There's never a good time to feed a moose, but messing up their digestive system when they're already nutritionally stressed is an especially bad idea" said Battle. To put it simply, feeding a moose is much more likely to contribute to its death than benefit the animal.

In addition to other foods that moose shouldn't eat, like apples and carrots, livestock owners should ensure that animal feed such as rabbit pellets or hay is not accessible to moose. Tim Peltier, Palmer Area Wildlife Biologist said, "We have had reports in the valley of moose getting into rabbit feed and hay stacks that are not secured. Just as you want to avoid bears getting into dog food and bird seed, people need to be aware of attractants to moose. Once a moose finds a source of food, they will likely want to stick around to take advantage of it, and they can be hard to dissuade." Animal feed should be secured in a way that prevents moose from getting to it.

Not all ornery moose have received handouts. "Moose are just barely making it through winter right now," said Battle. "They're nutritionally stressed, tired, and irritable. We need to keep our distance." Ordinary encounters with people, pets, and automobiles this time of year are compounded by stresses associated with winter. To stay safe, biologists advise people to be alert and give moose plenty of space in all situations. When

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encountered on trails, don't try to pressure moose to leave; instead, walk far around them or turn and go back the way you came. Also, keep pets inside or on a leash if moose are in the yard or encountered on local streets or trails.

People who encounter aggressive moose around their homes or in areas frequented by the public, or who witness feeding or see evidence of feeding, are asked to contact the nearest Alaska Department of Fish and Game office or report online at the ADF&G website at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=reportwildlifeencounter.main>. Outside office hours, or in the case of an immediate public safety threat, call 911 or the Alaska Wildlife Troopers.

For more about moose safety, see <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livewith.aggressivemoose>

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