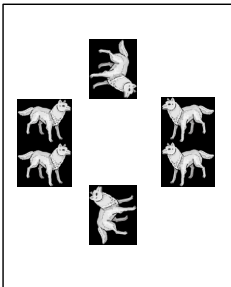
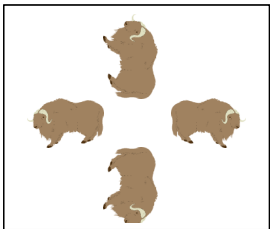
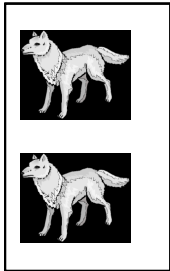
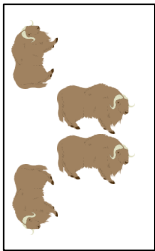
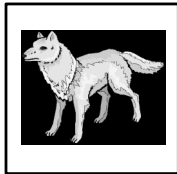


Musk oxen defend themselves!

The pictures below show how musk oxen arrange themselves when they are approached by one, two, or six wolves...



BOOKS TO READ

Alaska ABC Book by Charlene Kreeger and Shannon Cartwright (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 1978).

Muktu, the Backward Muskox by Heather Kellerhals-Stewart (R.H. Printing Ltd, 1999).

Muskox: Little Tooktoo's Friend by Marie Ahnighito Peary (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1931).

On the Tundra by Jen Green (New York: Crabtree Publishing Company, 2002).

Unscramble the letters...

1. IUVIQT

2. LOLOWY HTMOMMA

3. TACRIC

4. SUMK NOXE

Answers: 1. QIVUIT, 2. WOOLLY MAMMOTH,
3. ARCTIC, 4. MUSK OXEN

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The Musk Ox



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What is a musk ox?
How does a musk ox defend itself?
How do musk ox keep warm?



The Peary-MacMillan
Arctic Museum
& Arctic Studies Center

Bowdoin College

What is that hairy beast?

At first glance, the musk ox looks like a buffalo in desperate need of a good haircut. The musk ox actually is closely related to sheep and goats. Can you see the resemblance?

Unlike the American buffalo, however, the musk ox is one of only two hoofed Arctic



mammals that were able to survive the last Ice Age (the other mammal is the caribou). Musk oxen have been around for a *very* long time. While the woolly mammoth and other great mammals of the Ice Age went extinct about 10,000 years ago, the musk ox can still be found roaming throughout parts of the Arctic. It is an herbivore, which means it eats plants. It frequents windy, snow-free places where vegetation is available even in the winter.



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How does that hairy beast keep warm?

Well, if *your* body was covered in an outer layer of hair that was 2 feet long and an under layer of the softest and warmest wool in the world, the cold Arctic air wouldn't bother *you* in the least, would it? Well, that's how the musk ox, who has earned the name *omingmak* or "the bearded one," feels about it, anyway.

The short, soft wool that keeps the musk ox warm in the cold is called *qiviut* (kee-vee-oot).

Adult musk oxen produce between 6 and 8 pounds of qiviut each year. When it gets too hot in the spring, they shed it. In the 1960s, people started creating musk oxen farms where shed qiviut is gathered, spun into yarn, and sold for making things like *very* warm scarves and hats for knitting and wearing.

Guess What!

One pound of qiviut can cost up to \$400! Why? Qiviut is **8** times warmer than regular wool and it doesn't shrink when it gets wet!

Inuit Myth

In the distant past, when animals were first created, the musk ox and the walrus found themselves unsatisfied with their forms. The walrus had large horns, making it hard to swim beneath the ice, while the musk ox had thick tusks, which made eating a very difficult task. The walrus told the musk ox that he had an excellent idea, or pearl of wisdom. He suggested that the musk ox give him his tusks in exchange for his horns. Upon completing this trade, the two found themselves content with their new forms.

Stand guard, musk ox!

The musk ox's short legs and boxy, hairy body help to protect against the cold, but what about defending itself against predators like wolves and bears? Well, musk oxen are herd animals, which means that they tend to travel in groups. When threatened, they band together to protect both the young musk oxen as well as each other.



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Depending on the number of predators, the musk oxen will form a line, a semi-circle, or a full circle.

Battle of the Bulls

When adult male musk oxen, or bulls, fight over an adult female musk ox, or cow, they charge toward one another at speeds of up to 17 miles per hour! When their horns clash, the sound is so loud that it can be heard from a mile away.

Sounds like a call for a vicious headache, but...

A muskox's skull is *FOUR inches thick!*