

ELK COUNTRY VISITOR CENTER

Looking Out for Little Elk

Female elk are called cows, and like most cows they make wonderful mothers. When first born, calves are very vulnerable. Even their camouflaged coats and tiny size aren't always enough to keep them hidden and safe. A cow's first priority is to protect her little ones from predators like bears or coyotes.



Protecting calves isn't easy: cows must hide their babies by keeping them away from the herd, returning to feed them a few times a day. If a predator shows up, the cow attacks it or leads it away from the calf. Even more impressive, cows keep predators from smelling and tracking their calves by gobbling up their babies' poop!



Elk at Play

It may be hard work being and caring for elk calves, but even elk enjoy playing together. For adult elk, splashing and chasing is fun; for calves it's much more.



Summer Sitters

Elk calves are born in spring. If they survive until summer, they're big and strong enough to join

the herd. During the summer, calves hang out together in groups, guarded by one cow "babysitter."

1. Newborn calves are especially vulnerable until they can run fast enough to escape predators. Then they can join the group of other calves with their mothers.
2. Elk calves spend their days in a group, protected by one or two cows who serve as "babysitters."
3. Like most young mammals, elk calves play together. Playing is fun, but it's also a way to learn new skills.



WHERE ARE THE ELK?

WHEN TO LOOK FOR CALVES

Calves are born in the spring, but because mothers carefully hide them, they may be hard to spot.

By summer, look for calves in groups guarded by a single cow. Grazing areas are a place to watch.

In fall, you may be able to spot a group of cows and calves together.

In winter, when food is scarce and weather severe, you may discover cows and calves grazing on shrubs under the cover of trees.

