

Pinkeye



- Pinkeye, also called infectious keratoconjunctivitis or IKC, is an eye infection commonly seen in young bucks during the fall and winter

Species Affected in Colorado

- Mule deer
- Moose
- Possibly bighorn sheep, white-tailed deer, or elk

What to Look For

- Red, cloudy, or crusted eyes
- Exudate staining fur under eye
- Blindness
- Circling
- Usually young bucks in fall or winter

Young mule deer buck with pinkeye, note crusting under eye



Cause and Transmission

Pinkeye, also called infectious keratoconjunctivitis or IKC, is an eye infection. Many factors contribute to the disease, especially infections with *Moraxella* species of bacteria. Infection of the eye typically occurs after the eye has been scratched or damaged. Bucks can spread the disease when sparring, and small antlers allow close face-to-face contact. This could explain why, in Colorado, this disease is most common in young mule deer bucks during the fall and winter. Pinkeye in moose is less common, and pinkeye is rare in other species such as bighorn sheep. For all species, affected animals should be reported to Colorado Parks and Wildlife for further examination. Pinkeye can be confused with other diseases including malignant catarrhal fever, or even ocular plague. Animals can recover from mild cases of pinkeye, but most animals with noticeable signs are already blind. Animals with pinkeye may stagger or seem disoriented due to blindness. They also often walk in circles, a symptom that is not completely understood.

Public Health Considerations

Pinkeye in deer is a different disease from pinkeye in humans, and the disease is not transmissible to people. Pathogens that cause pinkeye in deer are similar to those that cause pinkeye in cattle, but spread between deer and cattle has not been documented. In deer, pinkeye can look similar to plague, which is a fatal human disease. Sick wildlife should be reported to Colorado Parks and Wildlife for evaluation.

Additional Information/References:

Muñoz et al. 2018. Infectious keratoconjunctivitis in free-ranging mule deer in Wyoming: a retrospective study and identification of a novel herpesvirus. *Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation* 30(5) 665-670.

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