

An Investigation into the Plural of Moose

By Jonah and Hannah

The plural of moose isn't meese, though it is commonly mistaken to be so. Many people justify their use of the word "meese" because the plural of the word "goose" is "geese." While this logic may, at first glance, seem sound, the word "moose" entered the English lexicon thousands of years later and from a different language than the word "goose" did, and brought its unique pluralization structures with it. As such, the plural of the word "moose" is "moose".

The plural of "goose" is "geese" because it undergoes strong declension, meaning that it "decline[s] irregularly rather than by suffixation" (Wiktionary). In other words, strong declension is when "oo" in a word gets changed to "ee" when the word becomes plural. It is a regular feature of Germanic languages such as German, Russian, and Icelandic, and isn't just present in the word "goose"—it's also visible in words such as "foot" (feet) and "tooth" (teeth).

The word "moose" came into the English language thousands of years after the word "goose" did, around the early 1600s (the word "goose", meanwhile, has been around much longer and was even present in Old English). "Moose" came to English from Native American languages such as Knisteneaux and Abnaki, so the rules for making it plural are different than they are for "goose."

Another reason that the plural of the word "moose" isn't distinguishable from its non-plural form is that "in English, we tend to make solid substances that can be divided and still have the qualities of that substance uncountable," writes Sharon Muldrew. As a meat, moose's plural is "moose" just like pork's plural is "pork" and salmon's plural is "salmon". In English, one would say "would you like some more salmon?" and not "would you like some more salmons?" The same concept applies to "moose".

Every credible dictionary lists "moose" as the plural for moose. "As fitting as it might sound, the plural of moose is not and has never been meese," writes the Oxford Dictionary. "The only correct plural of moose is moose," states Grammarly in a blog post. Merriam-Webster, Dictionary.com, and numerous other dictionaries list the plural as "moose" as well.

In conclusion, the plural of "moose" isn't "meese" because it doesn't undergo strong declension in the way that Germanic words with "oo" in it do when being pluralized. "Moose" is the correct plural because the word follows standard meat-naming practices of not distinguishing the plural form from the singular one.

But what can you do to help the over 1.5 million moose being mispluralized daily? Be an upstander and correct people who are using the wrong word. Put up posters and spread the word. Buy a shirt from moosenotmeese.org, and proudly wear it. The only way we can solve this societal issue is by teaching people what they're doing wrong and how to do better.

Bibliography

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