

JOY IN MUDVILLE

by Lee Lamb

Every fall during the *rut*, or mating season, bull elk go plumb nuts. They let cows and other bulls know how big and burly they are by piercing the air with ear-splitting bugles. They tear up, or *horn*, saplings and shrubs with their antlers, then carry the victims around on their racks like hood ornaments. They are so busy keeping other bulls away from their *harem*, or group of cows, that they hardly even eat. But they do have time to play in the mud.

WHERE'S WALLOW?

If you've been out in elk country during the rut, you may have seen an elk wallow. They're often near a forest spring or wet meadow. Wallows are usually shallow, muddy bowls marked with antler jabs and hoofprints filled with oily-looking, musky-smelling water. Lots of times you'll smell a wallow before you see it.

MUDBATH A LA ELK

When a bull visits a wallow, he stands over it and pees onto his belly, legs and the muck underneath. Then he flops down into his

stinky mudbath, rolls from side to side and even wiggles on his back, all the while digging in with antlers and hooves for extra leverage. Once he's on his feet again he has a good shake, and then it's back to the business of chasing and tending cows.

HEY STINKY...OR IS IT SWEETIE?

Why do bull elk wallow? Biologists used to think they coated themselves with mud to cool down or ward off biting bugs. Now they think bulls wallow to burn off pent-up energy. But mostly to get good and smelly. During the rut, bulls' urine contains *pheromones*, or natural perfumes, that smell good to cows. Add a little mud, and the bull elk's version of Old Spice may be more than the ladies can resist!

THESE WORDS GOT ALL WALLOWED UP. CAN YOU UNSCRAMBLE THEM?



UAHTB DMS UBRYL JMD LUBGE
JTR UKMSY YLOI SKAEH LAWLWO OHNR
IOHFPROSTN EHPEOONRMS NITYSK CKMU USBG