



Deer Antlers: Regeneration, Function and Evolution

Richard J. Goss

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This is a book about one of nature's most remarkable accomplishments. When deer grow antlers they are actually regenerating anatomically complex appendages - something that no other mammal can do. The rate at which antler elongate makes them the fastest growing structures in the animal kingdom. Profoundly affected by male hormones, these secondary sex characters grow into massive tumors if the deer possessing them is castrated. These and other unique characteristics have made antlers the focus of extensive scientific research that addresses some provocative questions: From what tissues do antlers develop? By what morphogenetic mechanisms are they regenerated every year? What social functions prompted their initial evolution? How are they influenced by hormones, and by the seasonal daylength fluctuations that regulate their annual replacement cycles? These and many other questions are considered in this comprehensive account of antlerology.

Students of development, evolution, and behavior will find much to appreciate in this volume, as will ecologists, wildlife biologists, and zookeepers. It is a rich source of information for endocrinologists and physiologists interested in the relationship of antlers to the reproductive cycle. The orthopedists will find the study of antlers a valuable model of skeletal growth and bone disease, and the purported medicinal properties of velvet antlers will be a subject of interest to the pharmacologist.

Deer Antlers: Regeneration, Function, and Evolution is as scientifically accurate as it is readable. It does not answer all questions about these unique appendages, but it is certain to arouse curiosity about the many unsolved problems of how antlers grow, die, and are shed in the course of a single year.

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