



Guide to Hunting in Germany

08e – CHAMOIS (*GAMSWILD*)



Breeding season (<i>Brunftzeit</i>):	November
Gestation period:	20-21 weeks
Young are born:	May (one, sometimes two)
Teeth:	32
Males:	<i>Gamsbock</i>
Females:	<i>Geiss</i>
Fawns:	<i>Kitz</i>
Herd:	<i>Rudel</i>

Based on fossils, scientists believe that some 100,000 years ago, ancestors of chamois known in Europe today originally migrated from Central Asia. These populations were wiped out during the last ice-age, except for chamois that are located in the Apennine and the Pyrenees mountain ranges.

When the glaciers melted away, about 10,000 years ago, another Chamois migration from Asia led to a re-population of Eastern and Central Europe, except for Scandinavia and the British Islands.



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As a true mountain animal, Chamois lived mainly in regions with rocks and steep cliffs and outside the forest. With the increasing extension of forest on the former taiga landscape, Chamois became restricted to Alpine areas. In this sense, “Alpine” means regions above the forest line.

These were mainly the Carpathians, the Tatra, the Dinarids, the Alps, the Apennines, and the Pyrenees. Aside from alpine regions, Chamois have also been introduced successfully to some parts in Europe (Schwarzwald and Elbsandsteingebirge, Germany), and to New Zealand.

The chamois is a member of the family Bovidae. Chamois is a very distinct genus, with no close relatives in the world of cloven hoofed game. The Serau and the Goral, both in Central Asia, and the Snow Goat in North America are considered the closest relatives.

Compared to other cloven hoofed game like Roe Deer or Red Deer, the chamois appears as a compact animal with strong, stout legs. This impression is enhanced during the cold season, when they wear a black winter coat with rather long, dense hair.

Only the face, the throat, and the belly are colored yellowish during that time. In summer, the body of chamois is light brown with a black line along the back, and with dark legs. Year round, they have a dark stripe (*Zuegel*) through the eyes to the nose. Fawns are born with normal summer coat, but they are darker than adults.





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At first glance, both genders look the same. However, males are heavier than females, weighing around 30 (up to 40) kg in early fall, while females rarely get over 27kg. The horns of females don't curve as much as those of male chamois.

When alarmed, chamois make a whistle-like sound, for about one second, with decreasing pitch. Fawns bleat like goats, and males, during the rut, also express a sound which is similar to goats or sheep.

Originating from open habitats, the species has developed a very good sight. However, chamois are usually unable to detect objects that are completely motionless. In addition, they cannot distinguish colors. They also have a great ability to smell, but their hearing does not play an important role.

Chamois have a pair of glands behind their horns. During the rut, these glands increase to the size of a fig and secrete a smelly liquid, with which the bucks mark branches, blades of grass, and even rocks.

Both genders grow horns, which are never shed. The horns begin growing shortly after birth, stop at the beginning of winter time, and start growing again when the vegetation period begins. This is repeated every year. The annual growth is greatest during the first five years of life, with a maximum at an age of one year, corresponding with body growth.



Gamsgeiss and Gamsbock, in summer color



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From an age of five years on, the annual growth seldom exceeds more than 1- 2 mm. The annual growth periods at the horns are separated from each other through rings. Counting those rings (minus 1), one can exactly count the age of a chamois.



A successful *Gamsbockjagd*, in the Slovenian Alps

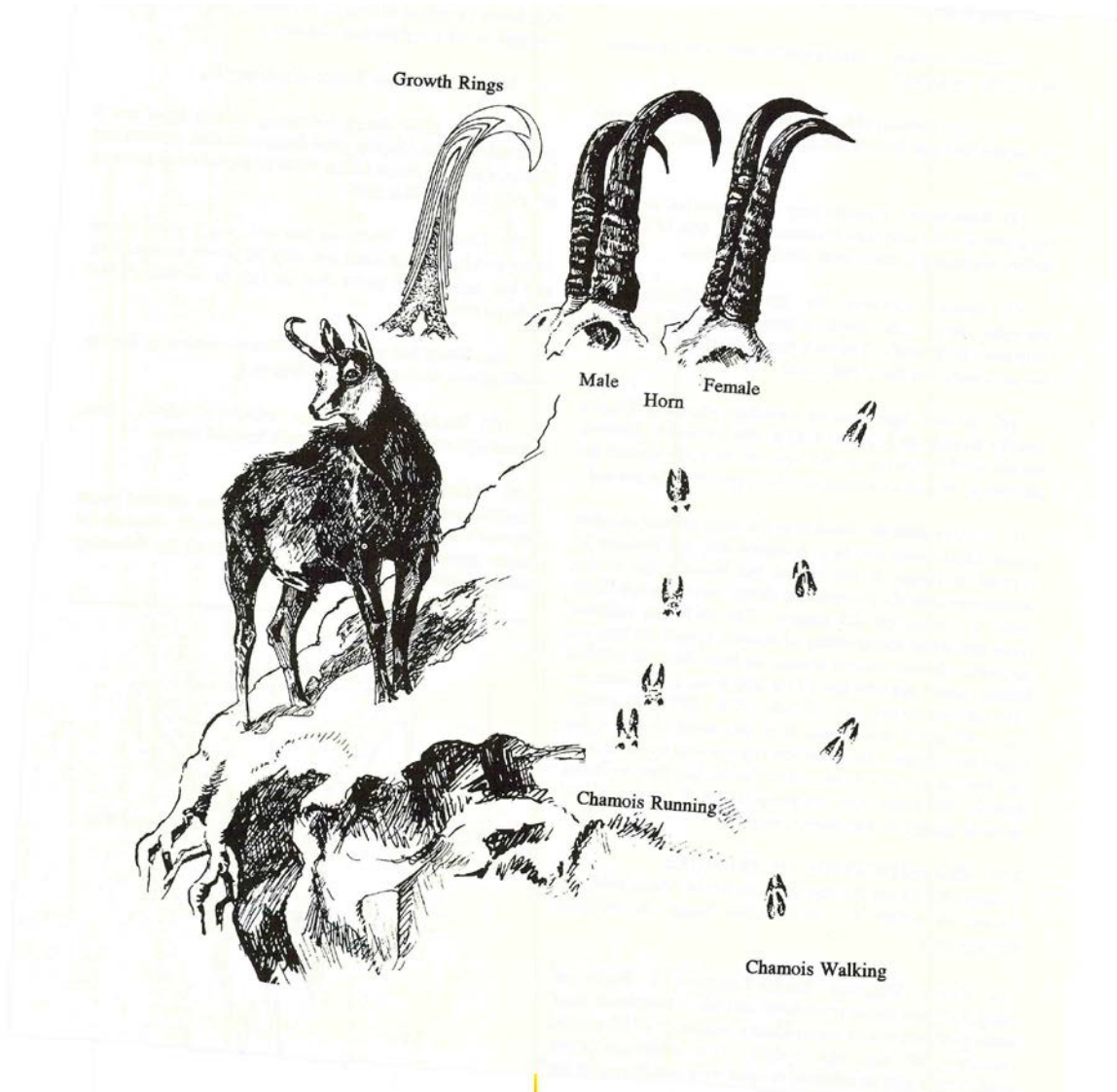
The chamois rut (*Brunftzeit*) occurs in late November. Adult males come from all directions to join the female groups.

At the beginning of *Brunft*, males are heavy in appearance, because they have gained extra weight during the summer.

Chasing rivals up and down the mountain, males try to establish dominance over a harem of females. This restless chasing burns away all their fat reserves. So at the end of the *Brunftzeit*, males are lean and thin.



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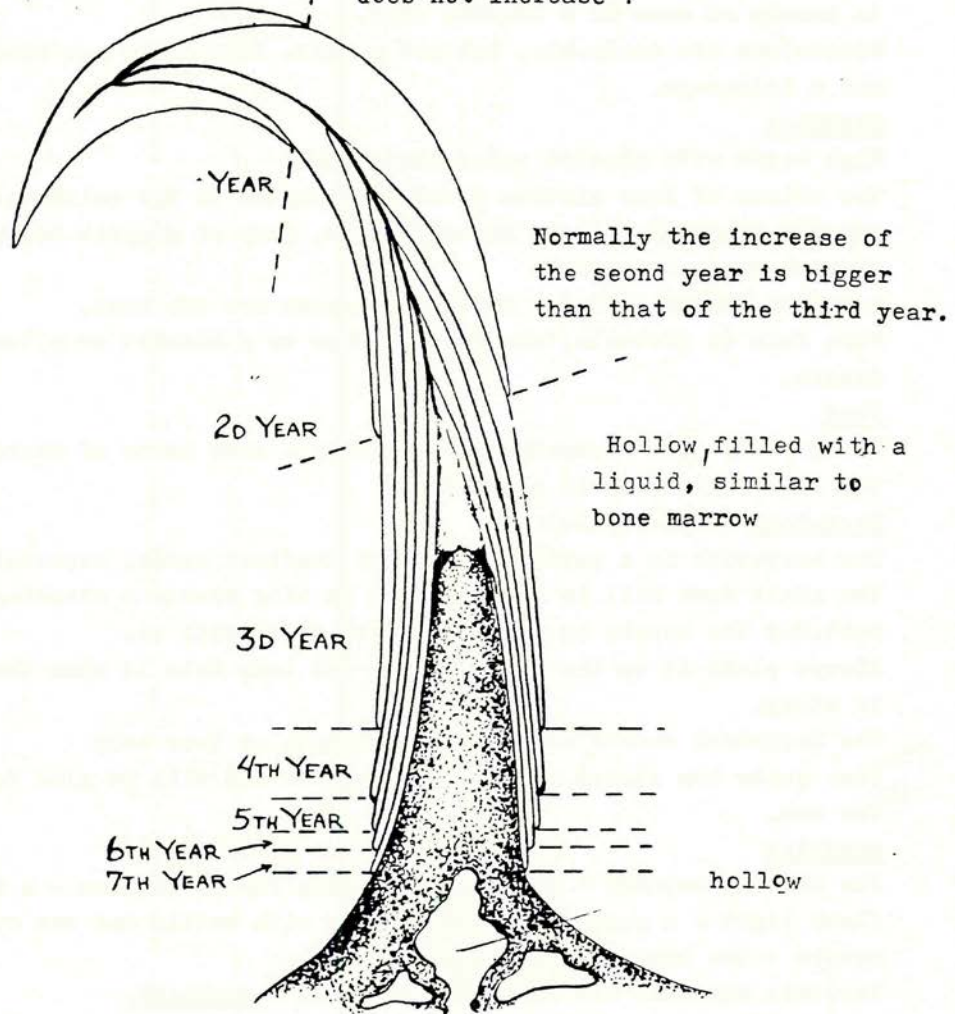
In the western Alps, mange (*Räude*) has reduced the population density considerably. The greatest losses happened where the Chamois density was high. Gams that are in poor body condition are in a high risk of infection from this fatal illness. Blindness occurs again and again in practically all populations.



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CHAMOIS HORNS

1th half year) Increasing from the birth in June until
December. During the winter the horn
does not increase !





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Gamsbockkitz



Gamsrudel