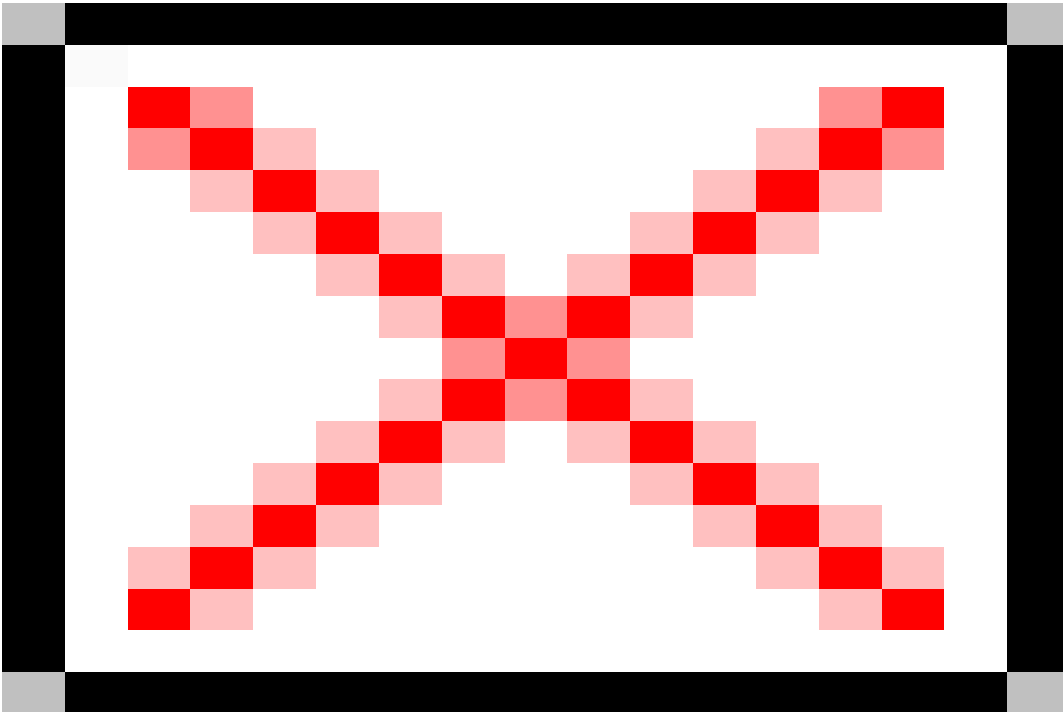




Deer (Fallow)



Fallow deer:

Dama dama

Distribution:

Native to the Mediterranean region & parts of the Middle East. Introduced widely in Europe, and to parts of North & South America, southern Africa & Australasia.

Habitat:

Woodland with grassy clearings for grazing.

Description:**Male:**

summer coat is reddish-brown with white spots. Palm shaped (palmate) antlers. Long, black, white-fringed tail & white, black-bordered rump.

Female:

smaller than male, no antlers but same coat colour. In winter, the coat has no spots & is dark grey. In some regions there are deer which are pale brown with spots (menil) as well as both black & white varieties.

Life-span:

15 years.

Size:**Height:**

- 70 - 95 /

Weight:

- 40 - 100kg /

Antlers:

- 60 - 95cm

Food:

grass, herbs, foliage, nuts, berries, bark, fungi.

The fallow deer was introduced into Britain by the Normans and wild herds have lived for centuries in ancient forests such as the New Forest, Epping Forest & the Forest of Dean. Later, semi-domesticated herds were introduced into the parks of stately homes and estates - one of the best-known places to see large herds of fallow deer is Richmond Park in London.

Fallow Deer Habits



Daily Life:

Wild fallow deer usually live in small herds. Park herds are often larger, numbering 70 animals or more. Outside the mating season,

bucks

(males) roam around in their own herds separately from the

does

(females) and their young. Dawn and dusk are the most likely times to spot deer feeding, although they may feed at any time. They prefer an open clearing with plenty of grass and other ground plants. During the day, the deer usually rest and ruminate (chew the cud) in undergrowth. Fallow deer rarely drink and appear to get all the water they need from dew and moisture in plants. In summer, the deer feed mainly on grasses and herbs, but also browse on the foliage of trees and bushes. The trees in deer parks often have a 'browse line' about 1.5 - 2m above the ground which marks the limit to which the deer can reach. In autumn and winter, the deer may eat nuts, berries, strips of bark, dead leaves, holly and fungi.

Breeding:

The mating season, known as the rut, usually begins in October and lasts about a month, although mating can take place at any time from September to February. At this time the bucks are very active and each one tries to herd together a group of does into his territory. Each buck marks his territory by scraping the soil with his hooves and antlers, urinating and rubbing his head against saplings, fraying the bark. He also thrashes his antlers against branches and bushes, and struts up and down, bellowing loudly. The intention of all this performance is to attract and mate with as many females as possible within his territory. Rival bucks fight fiercely, charging and clashing their antlers until one gives up injured or defeated and the other takes over the harem.

After a gestation (time between mating and birth) of 230 - 240 days, a single fawn (rarely twins) is born in long grass or bracken. The spotted fawn remains hidden for the first week or two of its life until it is strong enough to run with the herd. Groups of fawns may sometimes be seen playing together, gambolling and chasing each other. They spend much of the day trotting after their mothers and grazing, but are suckled several times a day. Many does suckle their fawns into the new year.

Antlers:

bucks begin to show the first sign of antler growth after two years and from then on, each year in April, the

antlers are shed and regrow a little larger and more elaborate every year. As the bony antlers grow, they are covered by a hairy skin called velvet. Blood vessels in the velvet supply food and oxygen to the growing bone. When the antler is fully grown, by late August, the velvet is shed and rubbed off and the antler dies, although it stays on the deer's head for several months.

Fallow Deer and Humans

Fallow deer have been widely introduced around the world for both food and sport. They were a favourite quarry of medieval huntsmen, who stalked them in the forests of Britain. Later on they became popular as animals to grace the grounds of stately homes. They are adaptable animals and those that escape from parks quickly establish feral (domesticated animal that returns to the wild) herds. Since man is now the deer's only main predator in Britain, (foxes sometimes take young fawns), the numbers of deer, especially in parks, have to be regularly culled (selectively killed) to prevent overcrowding, disease and destruction of their habitat.

Although the fallow deer is common, and increasing in some areas, in Britain, it is less common than it used to be in its original native range - southern Europe, Iran and Asia Minor.

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