

Support British deer with BDS

The British Deer Society (BDS) invites you to join our mission, guided by our commitment to ethics/welfare, science/research, and education/training. Together, we strive to ensure the well-being and fair treatment of British deer.

Who we are:

As a community of deer enthusiasts, the BDS is united in our mission to safeguard the welfare of deer, influencing policies and practices with decades of expertise and modern advancements in science and technology.

What we do:

Through research, education, and advocacy, we address critical issues like deer welfare, environmental impact, and sustainable deer management.

Why support us:

Support the BDS to ensure a UK where deer thrive in harmony with their environment. Your contribution will fund research that improves our understanding of deer in a changing world, provide education so more people can appreciate these amazing creatures, and support welfare initiatives to keep them thriving.

How to support us:

- **Membership:** Join our community and add your voice, speaking up for deer and staying informed with our quarterly magazine as well as regular news and updates from the Society, and connecting with fellow deer enthusiasts in your area.
- **Donations:** Every donation gift makes a significant impact on our efforts to speak up for deer.
- **Spread the word:** Follow us on social media @BritishDeerSociety and be an advocate for deer welfare and responsible deer management.

Join the BDS in preserving British deer and their habitats. Embrace our commitment – where passion meets purpose, and wildlife flourishes.



Discover Britain's diverse deer

Six deer species freely roam the British countryside, thriving in diverse habitats. Native and introduced, these adaptable creatures contribute significantly to Britain's biodiversity, embodying the essence of our captivating natural heritage.



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Visit www.bds.org.uk or scan the code to learn more about fallow deer.

WILD DEER OF THE UK

Identifying

FALLOW DEER

Dama dama



the british deer society Together for Deer

www.bds.org.uk

What to look for

Size

Fallow deer are a medium to large sized deer. Fully grown males (bucks) stand at around 0.84 to 0.95m tall at the shoulder and weigh between 46 and 95kg. Fully grown females (does) are 0.73 to 0.85m at the shoulder and weigh between 35 to 55kg.

Coat

Fallow deer have four main coat colour variations:

- **Common** – tan/fawn, with white spotting on flanks and white rump patch outlined with black horseshoe shaped border. Coat fades to a general two-tone grey colour during the winter
- **Menil** – paler colouration with white spots year-round and a caramel horseshoe shape on rump
- **Melanistic** – almost entirely black or chocolate coloured
- **White** – white to pale sandy-coloured turning increasingly white with age (this is a true colour and not albino).

Rear

Common variety fallow deer have a distinctive black inverted horseshoe shape on their rumps, and a black stripe on their tails which are the longest of all British deer. Caramel markings replace black for the menil variety.

Head

The fallow deer is the only species in Britain with palmate (flattened) antlers. Palmation does not generally develop until a buck's third or fourth set of antlers (although there may be local variations) and it might take six or seven years for them to reach their full potential. Antlers can typically measure up to 0.7m in length.

Listen out for

Vocalisation

Bucks groan loudly during the breeding season. Does in particular give single short barks when alarmed, while does and fawns communicate with soft bleats.

Look out for

Tracks and signs

Fallow deer leave large hoof prints (slots), about 6.5cm long, in soft ground. Their feet are more elongated than roe deer and, being a heavier deer, create deeper prints.

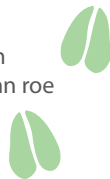


Photo: Lizzie Beard

Lifestyle

Feeding

Fallow deer are predominantly grazers but will also browse, and are not especially selective in their choice of food. Grasses are the main component of their diet although they do take woody plants in autumn and winter when nutrition in the grass is low.

Social organisation

Fallow deer are social animals that usually choose to live in single sex or mixed groups. Groups often come together to form large temporary herds in agricultural areas.

Breeding

Fallow deer usually produce a single offspring (fawn) in June or July. They have a gestation period of around eight months. The breeding season can be dependent on both the environment and population density. Bucks defend stands which are small territories often situated close to those of competitors. They perform ritualised displays, which include pacing, making scrapes and repeated groaning, intended to attract does to their stand for mating. Fighting between bucks may take place if they are evenly matched. The fallow mating season occurs in October and early November.

Humans and deer

Fallow deer can cause significant damage to young trees and agricultural crops, especially when planted at high density, and can cause considerable economic loss. Conversely, a commercial income can be made from selling fallow deer stalking especially as a form of population management. Fallow deer are also regularly farmed for venison and are one of the most important species maintained in Britain's historic parklands. Due to their successful breeding fallow deer frequently require diligent management to maintain both environmental balance and their ongoing welfare.

Where to find them

Origins

The fallow deer is common in Britain but is not truly native. It was generally accepted that the Normans were responsible for the main introductions of fallow during the 11th century, although more recent research suggests that in fact it is the Romans and not the Normans who first brought them to Britain. Fallow deer became the favoured deer for hunting, and deer parks and Royal hunting forests were created purely to keep them for food and sport. The populations in the wild today stem from these original locations.

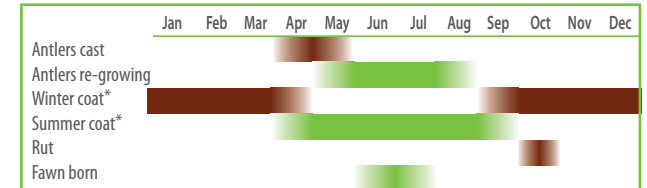
Population & distribution

Fallow deer are currently on the increase in Britain. Large herds can be found throughout the country but especially in parts of England.

Habitat

Fallow deer are mainly found in broadleaved woodland with thick low-level vegetation. However, they also increasingly favour open coniferous woodlands and agricultural land.

Seasonal activity



*Menil and other dark-coated forms of fallow deer may keep the same coat year round.



Photo: Tom Sreeter