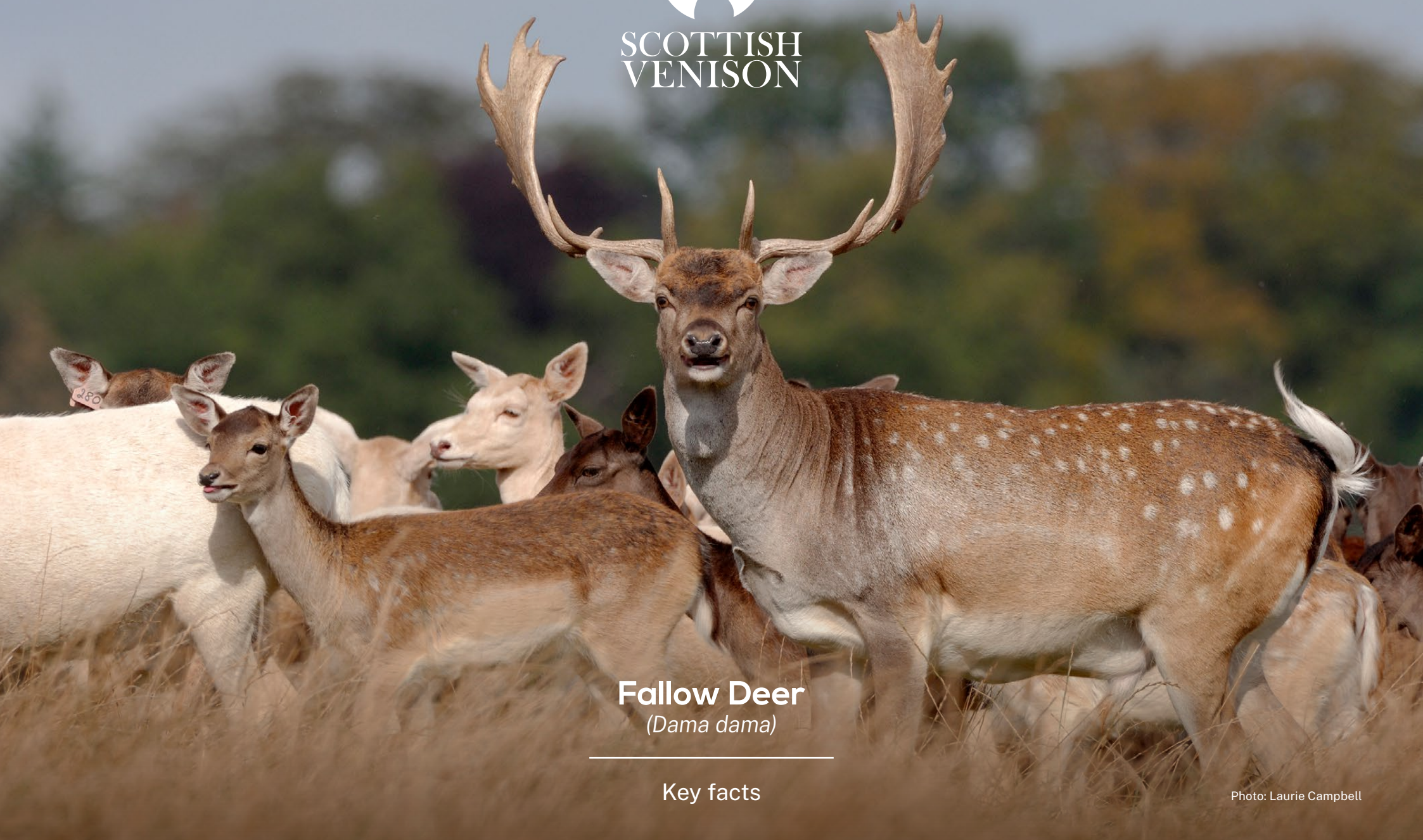




SCOTTISH
VENISON



Fallow Deer
(*Dama dama*)

Key facts

Photo: Laurie Campbell

Key Fallow Deer Facts

Males are called bucks / **Females** are called does

Adult Size

Bucks (males): 84 to 94cm at shoulder. Does (females): 73 to 91cm at shoulder, which is about the same size as a sika deer; smaller than a red and bigger than a roe deer.

Adult weight

Bucks: 46-94kg
Does: 35-56kg

Status

Non-native. Fallow deer were introduced to Britain in the 10th century by the Normans.

Colour

Summer coat is reddish brown to brown; winter coat is brown to grey.

Sounds

During the rut bucks groan tremendously and does with fawns give a short bark when alarmed.

Antlers

Only found on stags, a fallow deer's antlers are palmate – they are the only British deer with palmate antlers - which means that they have a flat area, like the palm of your hand, with 'fingers' extending from it in adults (>3 years). The antlers increase in size with age and grow up to 70cm long.

Lifespan

Exceptionally 16 years, but bucks rarely exceed 8 to 10 years.

Habitat

Mature broadleaf woodland with under-storey, open coniferous woodland, and open agricultural land.

Food and feed

Fallow deer are preferential grazers of grasses although trees and dwarf shrub shoots will be taken during autumn and winter.

Rut

Behaviour is dependent upon the environment and population density. In most populations bucks maintain a traditional, defended rutting stand. In others a temporary rutting stand is maintained to attract sufficient does to herd them into a harem. In areas with very high buck densities a lek may be formed. In lower density areas bucks may simply seek out receptive females.

During conflict, the escalation of display behaviour in bucks, from groaning and parallel walks to fighting, is in common with other larger species of deer.

Gestation

Around 229 days.

Young

Adult does give birth to a single calf (fawn) or exceptionally twins in June.

Social groups

Group sizes as well as the degree of sexual segregation varies according to population density and habitat. Groups of adult males and females, usually with young, remain apart for most of the year in large woodlands, only coming together to breed.

Sexes freely mix in large herds throughout the year in open, agricultural environments.

More natural history

Fallow deer were introduced by the Normans in the 10th century to Britain and were protected in royal hunting 'forests.' During mediaeval times many deer parks that held fallow deer were established and these and more recent park escapees have given rise to the wild-living populations in Britain today.

Fallow deer have several colour variations - the four main ones are common, menil, black and white.

The common variety is a tan/fawn colour with white spotting (becoming long and grey with indistinct spots in winter) on the flanks and white rump patch outlined with characteristic black horseshoe.

The Menil variety is paler, lacking the black bordered rump and keeping its white spots all year. The black variety is almost entirely black with no white coloration anywhere. Finally, the white variety can be white to sandy coloured and becomes whiter at adulthood. This is a true colour variety and not albinism, which is rare. The fallow is the only British deer with palmate antlers.

Fallow deer can do considerable damage by browsing tree shoots and agricultural crops and this puts them into conflict with farmers and foresters. They tend to be active throughout the 24-hour period but make more use of open spaces during dawn and dusk. Most hours of the daytime are spent lying down to ruminate between feeding bouts.

Many rural estates gain significant revenue from recreational stalking and venison production is also becoming an increasingly important revenue stream.

Fallow deer are also farmed for their venison and are one of the most important ornamental park species in the UK.

More information about fallow deer can be found on the British Deer Society website here:
bds.org.uk/information-advice/about-deer/deer-species/fallow-deer

More information about Scottish venison at scottish-venison.com

This project is supported by funding from the Scottish Government.