



SCOTTISH
VENISON



Roe Deer
(*Capreolus capreolus*)

Key facts

Photo: Laurie Campbell

Key Roe Deer Facts

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

Adult Size

60 to 75cm at shoulder - bucks (males) are slightly larger than does (females).

Adult weight

10kg to 25kg

Status

Roe deer are native to Britain.

Colour

In summer, their fur is reddish brown, but in winter a rather drab, grey or brown and sometimes black. They have a distinctive, black muzzle (nose and mouth area) and often have two light spots on either side of their chin.

Sounds

When alarmed both bucks and does give a short bark, which is often repeated. During the rut does make a high-pitched piping call to attract a buck who makes a rasping noise as he courts the doe.

Antlers

The antlers, which are only found on the bucks are short (up to 30cm) and have up to three points on each.

Lifespan

Can be up to 16 years, but bucks rarely live for more than 5 years and does around 6 to 7 years.

Habitat

Roe deer live throughout Scotland in woodlands and forests, fields, open hills and moors and they are also increasingly found on the edges of and even in our towns and cities, tucking themselves away in the grounds of industrial sites and hospitals, parks, graveyards and gardens.

Food and feed

Roe deer are browsers and actively select different food types including herbs, brambles, ivy, heather, bilberry and coniferous tree shoots.

Rut

The rut, or breeding season, takes between mid-July to mid-August. Bucks become aggressive and maintain exclusive territories around one or more does prior to this period.

Fights between bucks can result in serious injury or death with the winner taking over the loser's territory or his attendant doe. Does do not maintain exclusive territories but live within overlapping home ranges.

Males usually mate with several females and females mating with several males has also been observed. Courtship involves chasing between the buck and doe for some time until the doe is ready to mate.

Gestation

Although mating occurs in July / August the fertilised egg does not implant and start to grow until January. This is thought to be an adaptation to avoid does giving birth during harsh northern winters. 5 months later kids are born.

Young

Young roe deer, called kids, are born during May and June.

Number of young

Sometimes up to 3, but usually 1 or 2 kids.

Social groups

Roe deer are solitary but sometimes form small groups in winter.

More information

Roe deer are native to Britain and have been here since before the Mesolithic period 6,000 to 10,000 years ago. Clearance of forests, together with excessive hunting, led to roe deer becoming extinct in England by 1800, but they remained living in the hills and in the forests of Scotland. Today, they are widespread and quite abundant across the whole of Britain.

Roe deer are active throughout the day and night but make more use of open spaces during the hours of darkness – particularly in areas where there is a lot of daytime disturbance, such as the edges of towns and cities. Peak times of activity are at dawn and dusk. Long periods are spent “lying up”, which is where the deer lies down to ruminate between feeding bouts.

Roe deer can cause conflict with farmers and foresters by browsing tree shoots and agricultural crops, but they also offer a good source of income to many landholdings from recreational stalking and increasingly from venison production. Roe deer are harder to control than the larger deer species and are a frequent cause of road traffic accidents.

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

More information about Scottish venison at scottish-venison.com

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