

# Sika Deer

## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Cervus nippon*

**AKA:** Carw Sica (Welsh)

**Native to:** Japan, Taiwan and adjacent east Asia mainland

**Habitat:** Coniferous plantations and acid heath, and other habitats such as reedbeds

Sika deer are medium-sized deer. There is considerable variation in size as the Japanese subspecies (most common in the UK) is much smaller than the Manchurian subspecies (solely in parks).

Sika deer were first introduced into Britain in 1860, with numerous subsequent introductions to deer parks up until 1930. They became established in the wild following escape or deliberate release. The main populations are located in Argyll, Inverness-shire, Peebles-shire, Ross and Cromarty and Sutherland with strong populations in the New Forest, south-east Dorset, Lancashire and the Lake District.

Sika deer can hybridise with red deer where the distributions of the two species overlap. This poses a conservation threat to native red deer. Most of the sika deer in Scotland are hybrids with the only pure populations of sika in the New Forest and around Peebles and Moray in Scotland. Where populations are high sika can have a serious impact on woodlands, particularly on woody vegetation and ground flora. They damage mature timber crops with their antlers and also pose a threat to road users through collision.

Sika deer is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland. As such, it is an offence to release or allow the escape of this species into the wild.

For details of legislation go to [www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation).



## Key ID Features

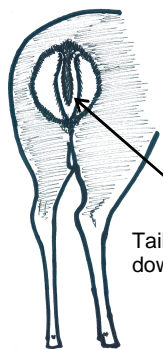
The existence of sika/red deer hybrids causes extensive variation in the sika population which can make identification difficult.

Female



Dark grey/brown winter coat

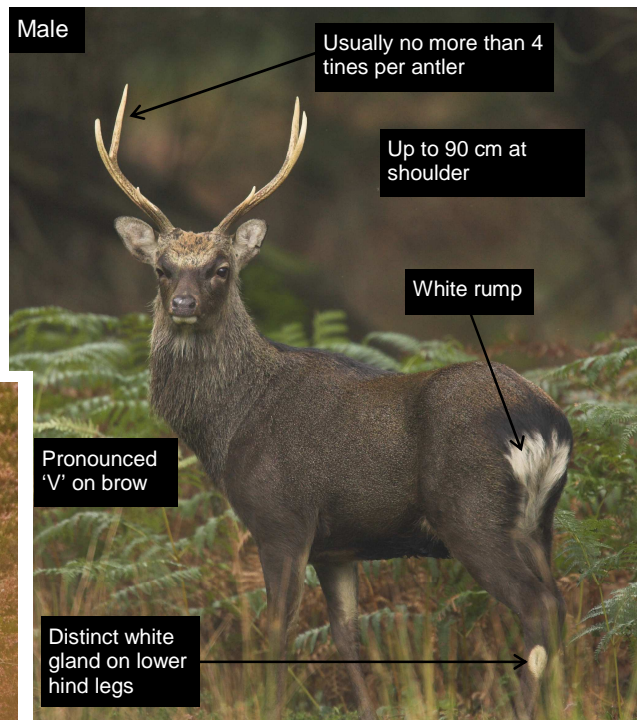
Summer coat with lines of whitish indistinct spots



Sika have a noticeable tail flash when alarmed

Tail extends part-way down white patch

Male



Usually no more than 4 tines per antler

Up to 90 cm at shoulder

White rump

Pronounced 'V' on brow

Distinct white gland on lower hind legs



# Identification throughout the year

Summer coat: chestnut-red with rows of whitish spots.

Winter coat: males are dark-grey to black; females are light-brown or grey.

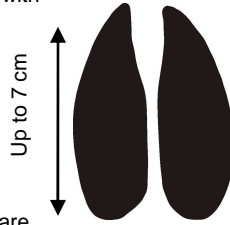
During the rut, males call with long drawn-out whistling cries, that rise and fall like a siren, repeated three or four times in series. The calls become more like a scream throughout the rut. Typically males defend the rutting territory but may switch to harem-holding when females gather. They may also form a lek (arena for competitive mating displays), or wander in search of females.

# Field Signs

Tracks similar to fallow but slightly wider and can be easily confused with roe, fallow and yearling red deer.

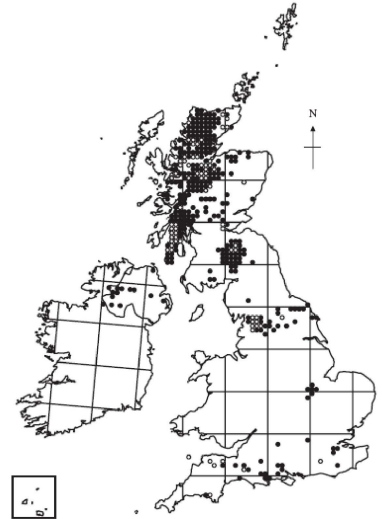
Droppings are a glossy black pellet with one end indented and the other pointed. They are easily confused with those of roe and red deer.

As with other deer, they rub their antlers against trees to remove velvet and as a territorial advertisement during breeding season. The most characteristic sign of sika is vertical grooves cut into mature tree trunks, usually at a height of 1.2 m, by antlers. Antlers are cast in May, growing during the summer for autumn.



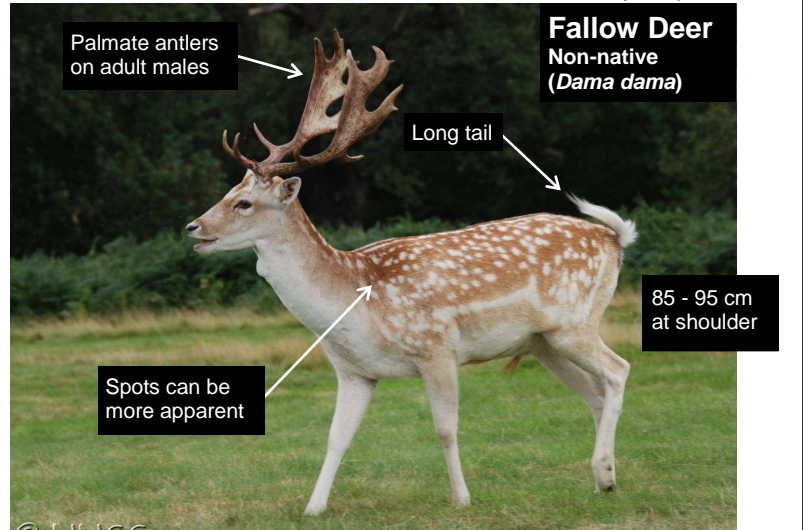
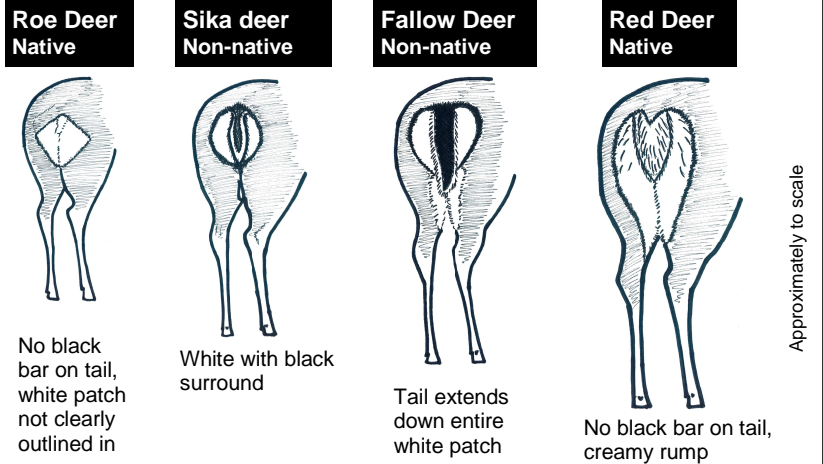
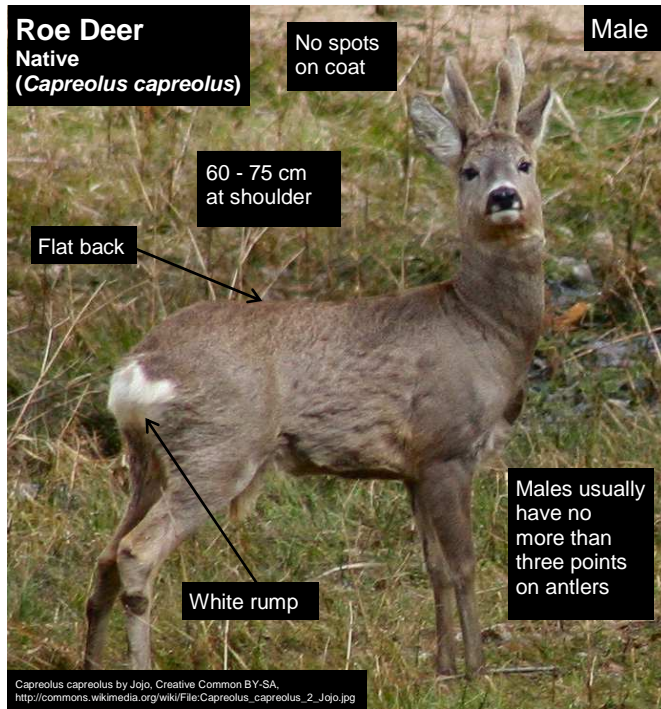
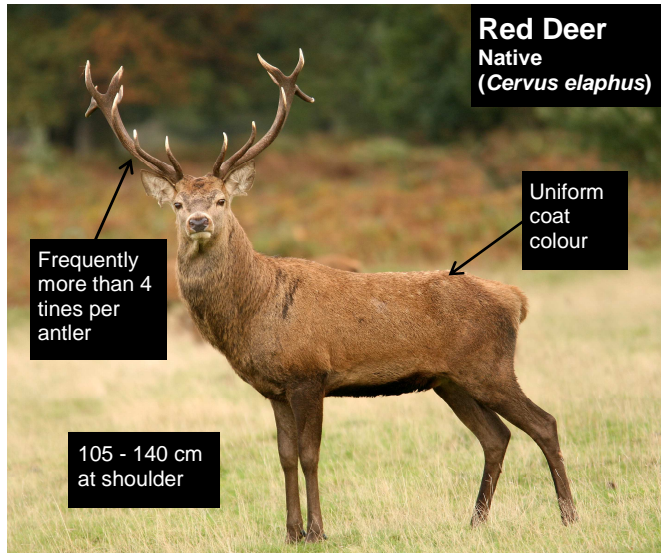
# Distribution

Not widely distributed in UK, with main population in Scotland.



Source: Alastair I. Ward, Mammal Review

# Similar Species



### References and further reading:

MacDonald, D and Barrett, P (1993) "Mammals of Britain and Europe. Collins

Harris, S and Yalden, D W (eds) (2008) "Mammals of the British Isles" Mammal Society

Sargent, G and Morris, O (2003) "How to Find and Identify Mammals" Mammal Society

Ward, A I (2005) "Expanding ranges of wild and feral deer in Great Britain" Mammal Review 35(2) 165-173