

Red Deer

Red deer

Originally a species of the tree margins they can adapt to life in a wide range of habitats. These can vary from exposed treeless hills and glens to sheltered broadleaved woodland to fields. They are browsers and grazers feeding on leaves, twigs, grasses and heather depending on the area in which they live.



Red Stags fighting

As there are now no natural predators on deer, their numbers need to be controlled by man in order to prevent serious damage to agricultural and forestry crops.

Since the late 1960's the Forest Service has implemented a professional and humane deer management policy. The objectives are to achieve efficient crop protection while always considering the welfare of the deer. Other management considerations such as sport stalking and venison production are secondary.

The opportunity for the public to see deer is provided in several Forest Parks with enclosed deer and in Tollymore Forest Park, Co. Down, where wild fallow may be encountered in the remote undisturbed areas.

Deer in the North of Ireland

Three species of wild deer occur in Ireland - Red, Fallow and Japanese Sika. The Giant Irish Elk and the reindeer became extinct in prehistoric times. Roe deer were introduced into Lissadel, Co. Sligo in 1870 but were wiped out in the 1920's.

Red Deer

Native to British Isles and the largest wild animal in Ireland. Descendants of the old pure strain of Irish Red deer still exist in Co. Kerry. All other Red deer are the result of many re-introductions from deer forests and parks in Scotland and England. Those in Caledon Castle were crossed with, the much larger North American Wapiti deer in the early years of the 20th century.

Red deer can be seen in the Forest Service park at Gosford Forest, Co. Armagh and in the wild in Lough Navar Forest and Killeter Forest, Co. Tyrone.

Japanese Sika deer

Natives of Eastern Asia they were introduced into Ireland in 1860 to Co. Wicklow. Some were subsequently sent to Colebrooke, Co. Fermanagh and Baronscourt, Co. Tyrone in the 19th century. As a result of escapes from estate deer parks Sika are now the most common deer in Fermanagh and Tyrone. Sika and Red deer can cross breed producing hybrids.

There is a small enclosed herd of Sika at Gortin Glen Forest Park.

Fallow deer

Originally a Mediterranean species introduced by the Normans in the 13th century. Fallow were most often associated with the deer parks of the large private estates. This accounts for the present wide distribution of Fallow resulting from the disbanding of these parks or escapes by the deer.

An enclosed herd can be seen in Randalstown Forest near Antrim. A herd of white Fallow is emparked at Parkanaur Forest near Dungannon.



Cycle

The most important and vocal time of the year for deer is the rut or mating season, which occurs over a comparatively short period in October. At this time the Master Stag, having battled for supremacy over the other stags, will collect a harem of perhaps as many as thirty hinds for mating.

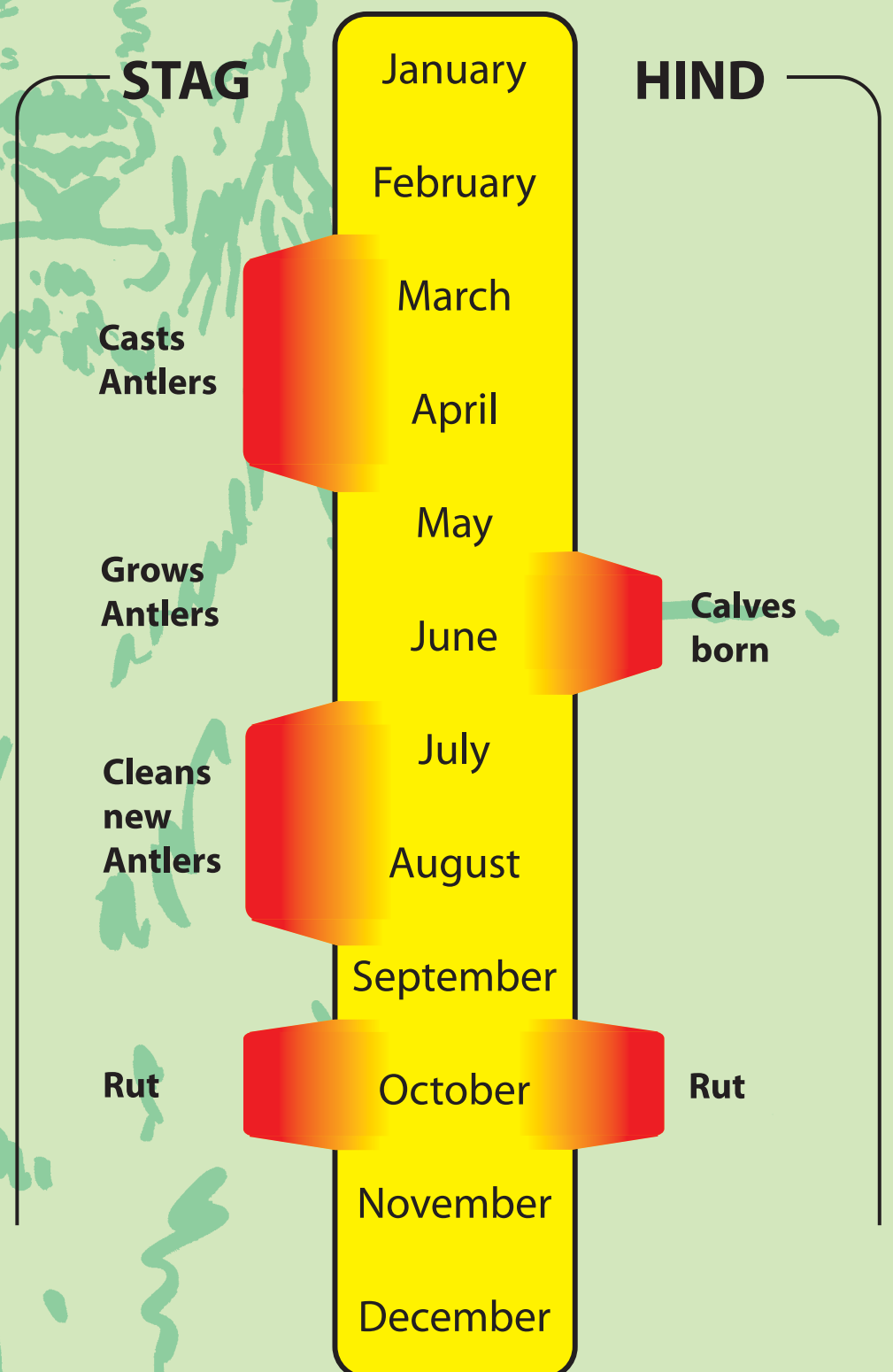
The pregnancy lasts around eight months, resulting in the young calves being born in late May through to mid-June. A single calf is usual, twins are rare.

In good conditions the hind will have her first calf on her 2nd birthday and continue for the next ten to twelve years.

After the young calf is born, it spends its first four or five days lying concealed in the undergrowth, the hind only returning to suckle at intervals.

Never disturb a young deer, it has not been abandoned, the mother will not be far away and will return.

Yearly Activity



Terminology

- STAG** - a male Red deer.
- HIND** - a female Red deer.
- CALF** - a young deer.
- RUT** - the mating season.
- ROAR** - the noise a Red stag makes during the rut.
- YELD** - a hind which does not conceive is known as a 'Yeld' for that year.
- ROYAL** - a stag with twelve points.
- STAGGIE** or **BROCKET** - a young stag with his first set of antlers.
- HUMMEL** - a stag that does not grow antlers.
- SWITCH** - a mature stag with only brow points and long unbranched beams.

Antler Growth

Normally only male deer grow antlers, and these are cast and re-grown each year.

The first set of antlers begins to grow when the young male deer approaches its first birthday. These will normally consist of two single spikes which will be cast the following Spring, and as each year passes, the antlers are cast and re-grown longer with more 'tines' or 'points'.

