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## DEER FACTS – MUSK DEER

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The Genus Moschus have 4 species. They originate mainly from Asia, covering an area from Tibet through China, Manchuria and Russia.

The 4 species are:

- Siberian Musk Deer
- Black Musk Deer
- Dwarf or Chinese Forest Musk Deer
- Himalayan or Alpine Musk Deer

Musk deer are more primitive than the cervids, or true deer, as they do not have antlers or facial glands and only a single pair of teats. Male musk deer, known as bucks, have 2 sharp tusks (upper canines), usually around 70cm long. They are known for producing the musk gland in a sac located between their genitals and umbilicus. Its secretions are most likely used to attract mates. Humans use the wax-like substance in perfume manufacture and oriental medicines. Musk deer have been hunted for their scent glands which can fetch up to \$45,000/kg on the black market.

Musk deer prefer forest and scrubby areas and generally keep to themselves....it is quite rare to find them in groups of even two or three.

An average sized buck will weigh approximately 11-14kg and be around 50-55cm high at the shoulder. It is interesting to note that the females are heavier than the males.

Their coloration can be quite variable depending on their age and the season, but as a rule they are rich brown speckled with light grey. Stocky in build, they have hare-like ears and their hind legs are longer than the front ones – this helps make them quick and agile jumpers.

The gestation period is around 178-198 days (6-6½ months) with the fawns being born in June. Normally musk deer only have one fawn and it is quite rare for twins to be born. The newborn young are very small and essentially motionless for the first month of their life. This helps them remain hidden from predators.

Their diet consists of leaves, flowers, and grasses, together with some mosses, lichens and shrubs such as oak and gaultheria.

Wildlife biologists estimate that current musk deer numbers range from 30,000 to 100,000. The Siberian musk deer is the most threatened. Hunting them for their musk and habitat destruction has endangered present day survival of all musk deer, but in the late 1950's China began a program to extract the musk without causing injury or death to the animal. Following its success, similar programs were implemented in India, Nepal and Russia.



**References:**

The Whitehead Encyclopedia of Deer

Websites: <http://care4nature.org>  
<http://wikipedia.com>