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DEER FACTS – FALLOW DEER

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Fallow deer are the second most farmed deer species in Australia, grown primarily for venison. There are two species of the genus *Dama* (depending on which classification system used), the European Fallow (*Dama dama*) which is indigenous to the Mediterranean region of Europe, and the Mesopotamian Fallow (*Dama mesopotamica*) which is indigenous to Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan and Lebanon.

European Fallow: Mostly reddish brown with yellowish-white spots, there are many variants in coloring ranging from the darker/greyish version to the albino. Coat glossiness also varies from season to season.

The male bucks weigh around 56-63kg with an average shoulder height of 81-91cm while the female does are 75-85cm at shoulder height and weigh on average 40-50kg. Fawns born in spring weigh approximately 4.5kg and are around 30cm tall. Their natural life span is 12-16 years.

The bucks' antlers are broad and shovel-shaped (palmate) from the age of 3 years.

Mesopotamian (Persian) Fallow: These fallow have a more consistent coloring of dark reddish – brown with rows of white spots along each side of the backbone and a white underbelly. They are around 95-110cm at shoulder height and weigh approximately 70-95kg.

The big visual difference between the European and Persian fallow is the formation of their antlers. The Persian Fallow antlers having a brow tyne of moderate length and no bey tyne. Limited palmation only occurs at the top of the antler as distinct from the European fallow.

The gestation period for both is about 7 ½ months (225-230days) with generally single fawns being born, although twins do occasionally occur.



Fallow Deer



L = European Fallow
R = Mesopotamian Fallow



L = Mesopotamian Fallow
R = European Fallow

Fallow are preferential grazers but they do enjoy tree and shrub shoots and some agricultural crops, the resulting damage is of course where wild herds come in conflict with farmers and environmentalists.

Commercially, fallow deer are farmed mainly for venison, although where legal, velvet can be harvested as there are markets for this product. In Europe where velvetting is not permitted, substantial revenue can be raised from recreational stalking.

In Australia many fallow deer farms not only supply venison, but also breeding stock for Safari Parks, where the best fallow buck scoring 300 DP (Douglas Points) can bring up to \$5000 and the average ones of 250DP can bring \$1500. In these environments, it has been found that fallow can be aggressive in nature and it can be difficult to get them to their peak condition as the older animals are the most vulnerable, with young ones always looking to work their way up to the dominant position. From a farming perspective, they are very efficient food converters, producing approx. 20kg of venison per DSE.

The downside is of course that the fawning occurs in summer and supplementary feeding is necessary, as with other farmed deer in Australia.

Did You Know:

Fallow deer can:

- run up to 45km/h over short distances
- jump up to 1.75m high
- jump up to 5m in length

The Long Haired Fallow Deer: In the Mortimer Forest in Ludlow, Shropshire, lives a unique long haired variety of fallow deer. A scientific study conducted between 1975 and 1985 showed that the long hair in these fallow is an expression of a dominant gene. Generally these fallow look outstanding with their long hair and tail hair, shaggy ear tufts and a mass of curls above the eyes. Both males and females can have the long hair but this does not necessarily mean the fawns will also be long haired.

History in Australia: Fallow deer are believed to have been first introduced and released in Campbelltown, Tasmania in 1834, later at Albury NSW in 1884. It is believed most deer were introduced by Acclimatization Societies, with some of the earlier releases failing altogether.

In Victoria, the earliest known release occurred in the 1840's, during which time deer hunting was increasingly popular. They are now the most widespread of the 6 deer species introduced to Australia and wild populations have successfully adapted to the Australian environment in Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria, NSW and Queensland.

Increased wild populations have been fueled by farm escapes and deliberate releases during earlier difficult times in the deer farming industry.

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