

Cervus nippon



Taxon	Family / Order / Class / Phylum
<i>Cervus nippon</i> Temminck, 1838	Cervidae / Artiodactyla / Mammalia / Chordata

COMMON NAMES (English only)

Sika deer
Japanese deer

SYNONYMS

None

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Small to medium-sized deer. Adult males are larger than females (weight: females 25-45 kg, males 40-110; height at shoulder 950-1400 cm). Relatively simple antlers. Summer coat is chestnut or fawn, marked with distinct white spots. The most distinctive characteristic is a white caudal patch outlined in black. Young are spotted. These herbivores mainly feed on foliage, forbs, twigs, mast and many grass species, switching from grazing to browsing depending on the local situation.

BIOLOGY/ECOLOGY

Dispersal mechanisms

Usually sedentary, show relatively small movements between summer and winter range. In a continuous optimal habitat, sika show a steady expansion in range, estimated in UK at between 3 and 5km per year. In areas with fragmented habitats, dispersal is characterized by long periods of no movements, followed by a sudden and rapid irruption from the source. Young males disperse first.

Reproduction

Rutting seasons in Europe is in September-November. It has extremely high reproductive rates (conception rate 80-90%; adult pregnancy rates 85-100%). Gestation 210-246 days: calves (1, occasionally 2) are born in May-June. Most hinds breed successfully for the first time as yearlings.

Known predators/herbivores

High neonatal mortality (survival rate in December 40-50%) largely due, in Europe, to predation of calves by red foxes.

Resistant stages (seeds, spores etc.)

HABITAT

Native (EUNIS code)

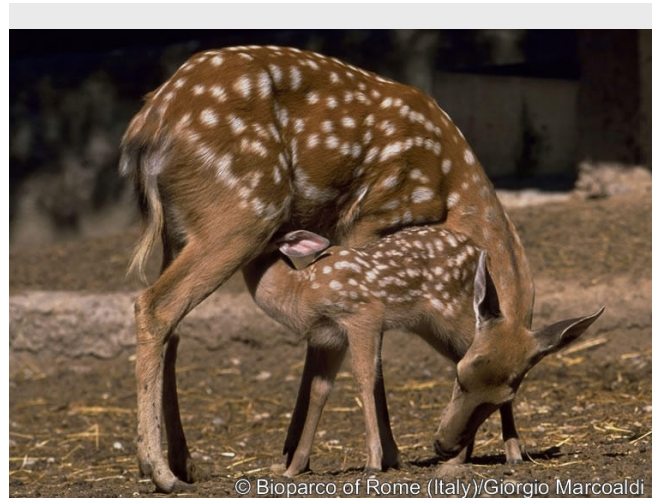
E: Grassland and tall forb habitats, G: Woodland and forest habitats and other wooded land

Habitat occupied in invaded range (EUNIS code)

E: Grassland and tall forb habitats, F3: Temperate and mediterraneo-montane scrub habitats, F4: Temperate shrub heathland, F8: Thermo-Atlantic xerophytic habitats, G: Woodland and forest habitats and other wooded land, I: Regularly or recently cultivated agricultural, horticultural and domestic habitats

Habitat requirements

Favoured by warm climates (12° N to 46° N), selects areas where snowfall does not exceed 10-20 cm and snow-free sites are also available. British populations are primarily associated with acid soils and the majority of populations are established in coniferous plantations and adjacent heath. However, they can also be found in estuarine reed beds and similar wet areas. Prefers early seral stages over mature forests.



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***Cervus nippon* with the characteristic spotted coat, is a medium-sized deer.**

Photo: Bioparco of Rome (Italy)/Giorgio Marcoaldi

DISTRIBUTION

Native Range

Eastern Asia. South Eastern Siberia to eastern China, Japan, Taiwan and south through Manchuria and Korea

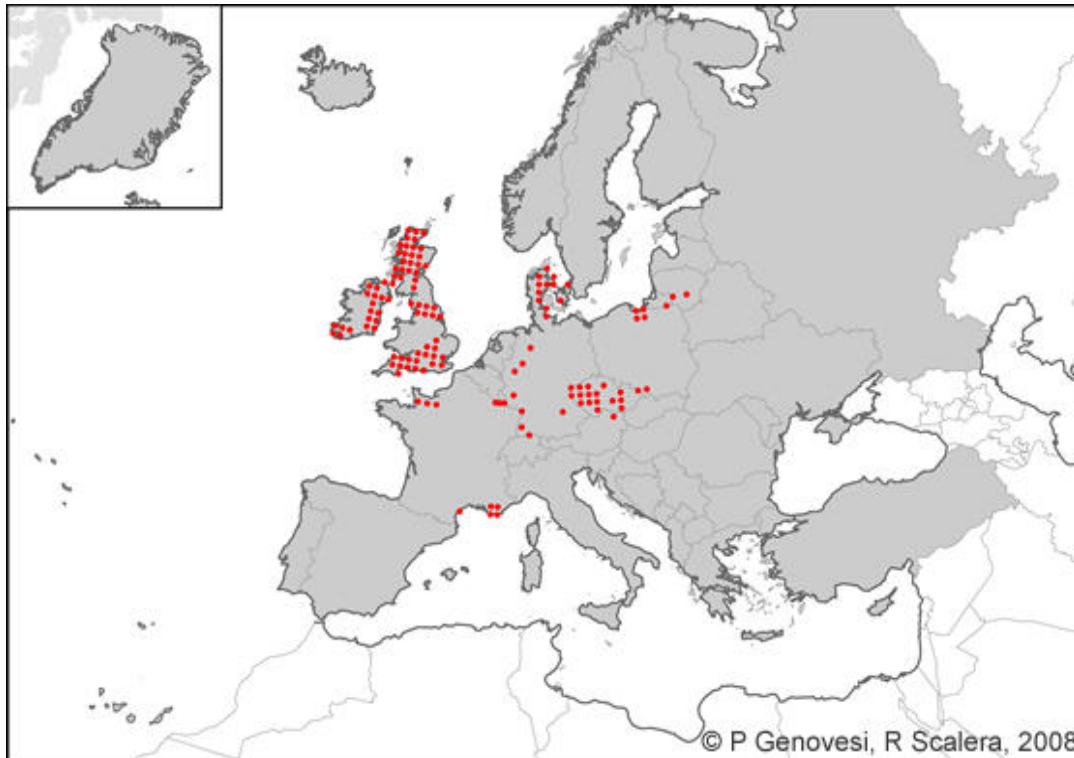
Known Introduced Range

Introduced in many areas of the world: New Zealand, South Africa, Morocco, Australia, Papua New Guinea, North America. In Europe feral populations present in Britain, Ireland, Denmark France, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, Czech Republic, Russia.




Trend

In many European countries it is increasing and expanding. (e.g. 5.3% per yr in mainland Britain between 1972-2002).

MAP (European distribution)



Legend

	Known in country		Known in CGRS square		Known in sea
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INTRODUCTION PATHWAY

Introduced in many areas of the world as ornamental and/or game species. Commonly bred in farms. Feral populations originated from either deliberate releases into the wild, or escapees from parks and farms.

IMPACT

Ecosystem Impact

Damage is due to ring barking (especially in hard winters), browsing, trampling, antler rubbing, erosion due to creation of trails and degradation of water quality in creeks and streams. Mature trees may also suffer additional damage through bole-scoring (characteristic of this species). In open heathland and/or wetland areas, sika can cause significant change in vegetational structure and species composition of both plants and animals.

Hybrids with the native congeneric red deer are fertile, and further hybridisation or back-crossing to either parental type is rapid threatening the genetic integrity of the native species.

Health and Social Impact

In Eastern Europe, sika play a role in the epidemiology of *Asworthius sidemi*, a nematode affecting bison, roe deer, red deer and potentially livestock. Both bovine and avian TB recorded in captive and wild populations.

Economic Impact

Sika are a serious forest pest, causing significant damage to broadleaved and conifer plantations.

MANAGEMENT

Prevention

Sika deer can be excluded from vulnerable croplands by erecting fences (electric; wire mesh 1-7 m height, mesh size 220x300). Individual tree protectors can effectively protect young trees. Deterrents can in some cases be temporarily effective (pyrotechnics, exploders, spotlights, etc). Ultrasounds are largely ineffective.

Mechanical

Control usually by shooting. Capture through individual traps or corral devices can be effective management alternatives.

Chemical

Chemical repellents are ineffective. Methods to control fertility through chemicals or immunocontraceptives are being explored, but are not yet available.

Biological

None

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