



Ask about Ireland



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Red Deer



Latin: *Cervus elaphus*

Irish: *Fia Rua*

Size: Shoulder height of an adult stag (male) is about 140cm, and an adult hind (female) 120cm

Months seen: All year

Food: Deer are herbivores. Red deer primarily graze on various grasses, but will also eat leaves, acorns, fruits, mushrooms and agricultural crops.

Features: The native red deer is Ireland's largest land mammal. Two other species of deer are found in Ireland: sika deer and fallow deer.

Only the male deer have antlers, which are u-shaped when viewed head-on. These are shed during March and April, and the next set begins to grow immediately. During the summer months, the coat is deep chestnut-red colour but this dulls to a brown colour during the winter. The underside is a cream colour with some faint beige spots.

Both male and female deer are usually silent animals, with the exception of when they become alarmed, or when they begin the rutting (mating) calls. The rutting call of a red stag is an impressive roar that can be repeated many times and heard at long distances. Males can get very aggressive at this time and fights over females can quickly break out.

Mating occurs from September to November, and calves are usually born in May or June. They are born with a spotty coat which remains until they are two months old. Calves stay with their mother until they are two years of age.

