

City of London

City Commons - Position Statement on Wild Deer

Deer are wild animals.

Of the six species found in Britain three - Roe, Muntjac and Fallow, are seen on City Commons. These species are increasing in numbers and extending their range in south east England. Roe Deer are most likely to be seen on the Commons, whilst Muntjac Deer, a species introduced from Asia, which are smaller and more secretive and rarely seen. Fallow Deer is a species introduced from the Mediterranean and is occasionally seen on Farthing Downs. Roe and Muntjac are woodland deer but frequently venture into the open to feed, especially at night. They are selective grazers (eating wild flowers & grass) and browsers (eating growing shoots of shrubs and trees).

Population

Their social structure is based on the family unit and they are territorial. They don't respect boundaries, so although they roam on the Commons, they are not confined to them. Any deer seen on our Commons belong to a population spread over the whole of the open space.

Value

Roe Deer are part of our native fauna and their presence is valued both in their own right, and for their grazing and browsing - roles they've shared with livestock on the Commons for generations. Deer browsing helps to control bramble and dense shrubs and their selective feeding creates a mosaic of vegetation providing niches for a variety of wildlife.

Public appreciation

Many people love seeing them and think they are an obvious asset. Conversely, some neighbours with unprotected gardens, think of them as a serious pest as they destroy their plants.

Impact of deer on City Commons

As mentioned above, their role as grazers and browsers benefits the Commons' ecology. We believe that deer numbers are relatively low as we have seen very little damage to the habitats found on the Commons.

Impact of deer on neighbours' gardens

Gardens can be particularly attractive to deer because they provide much more variety of food in a concentrated area than our open spaces. Deer tend to target exotic plants in gardens out of curiosity.

The most effective deterrent is human presence; however you'd probably need to be doing something active in the garden frequently and for long periods for this to work - and deer may visit at night. Therefore, the only effective way to prevent deer damaging your garden is to exclude them with a secure fence or screen that obscures a deer's view into your property. If a deer can see through the fence it will have no hesitation jumping 2m (7 feet) high. Such fencing can be expensive and the references attached provide more details on the specification for fences and guards.

Individual trees and shrubs can be protected with guards. They need to be at least 1.2m tall for Roe Deer and 1.5m tall for Muntjac and Fallow Deer. These shelters are obtainable from large garden centres and are relatively inexpensive.

Deer-resistant plants.

Some plants are less attractive to deer though what they select can be influenced by what else is present.

Further information

**See Natural England advisory leaflet "Deer: problems in urban and suburban areas"
TIN044**

The British Deer Society "Deer in lowland gardens"

<http://www.bds.org.uk/deerinyourgarden.html>

The British Deer Society "Deer deterrents" including fencing

<http://www.bds.org.uk/deerdeterrents.html>

The Forestry Commission leaflet on deer fencing

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpn9.pdf/\\$FILE/fcpn9.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpn9.pdf/$FILE/fcpn9.pdf)