

Frequently Asked Questions



What Species of Deer are Farmed?

There are two main species of deer farmed commercially. Red deer and Fallow deer. In Britain, the majority of farms favour Red deer. Fallow deer however, are successfully farmed by a number of units and are often found in deer parks.

Do Deer Need Vaccinations and Worming?

In general, farmed deer are extremely healthy and require little or no veterinary assistance in comparison to other livestock. Deer on extensive and/or organic farms may not be wormed at all but generally most farms will worm their deer at least once a year using either a 'pour-on' or injectable wormer. Mineral supplements may be needed in some areas.

How is Finished Stock Sold?

Some units process or arrange for the cutting and packing of their own meat and sell it either to local butchers or the customer via their own retail operation eg. Farm shop or Farmer's markets. Deer can be either slaughtered on the farm or sold to one of the dedicated deer processors who will purchase finished stock, the deer are then transported to an abattoir with facilities approved for handling deer.

Do Deer Transport Well?

Yes, generally those that are regularly handled travel very well. With appropriate facilities, farmed deer can be handled, transported and housed with minimal stress.

How are Deer Handled?

The more regularly the deer are handled, the easier it becomes. Generally a raceway links the fields to the handling pens; a well designed system will facilitate moving the stock around. Once in the handling pens the deer are broken down into smaller groups, sorted, medication administered, possibly weighed, checked for condition etc.

A crush to restrain individuals whilst administering medications is desirable, particularly if a lot of yearlings are to be handled and also for de-antlering yearling stags. Drop floor and hydraulic crushes designed specifically for deer are available. For small numbers it is possible to carry out the majority of operations in a small pen with the assistance of a forcing door. Fallow deer respond to light, they are often handled in the dark, with a light source being used to attract them. Deer will often become calmer if their eyes are covered.

Do Deer Need to be De-Antlered?

It is safer for the stock and the stockman if the antlers are removed as soon as the velvet is cleaned off. Towards the end of the summer the antler stops growing and the stag cleans off the velvet by rubbing his antlers on woody vegetation and fence posts. Once the velvet has been removed and the antler is hard they can be cut off without any pain. It is illegal to remove soft antler (velvet), except for medical reasons.

What are the Recommended Stocking Densities?

This depends very much upon the type of grassland, the management systems and whether the stock is housed in the winter or not. As a guide only:

	Hillside	Upland Pasture	Good Lowland Pasture
Hind & Calf	1 to 1.5 per ha	7 per ha	10 to 20 per ha
Yearlings		16 to 20 per ha	Up to 25 per ha

The amount of space required in winter housing is generally recommended to be 3m² for a hind and 2.5m² for calves.

What Fencing is Required?

The perimeter fence is the most important and needs to be at least 1.8m (6ft) high, using tensile netting. Internal fences do not need to be as high; 1.6m is sufficient. Raceways and pressure points need to have strong secure fencing at least as good as the boundary fence. Existing stock fences can be extended using wire netting and provide a cheaper alternative to new fences. Electric fencing can be used to divide fields, although it is not recommended for small calves and stags with hard antler.

By Ali Loder & With thanks to Jane Emerson