

REEVES' MUNTJAC

Muntiacus reevesi (Ogilby, 1839)

Order: Artiodactyla



Reeves' muntjac is the UK's smallest deer, not much bigger than your average dog (height 45-52cm at shoulder) and weighing between 9 and 18kg.

They are typically red-brown in summer, but turn grey-brown in winter.

Their back legs are longer than their front legs, giving them a characteristic 'rounded back' appearance.

Males have short (10cm), straight, backwards pointing antlers that form a V-shaped ridge on the face (females have a U-shaped ridge). Males also have visible upper canine teeth. Both sexes have large facial glands below the eyes.

Muntjac are often called 'Barking deer' due to their habit of giving repeated loud barks that can travel long distances.

Unlike most other UK deer, muntjac are solitary. Bucks defend large territories against other males which encompass the territories of several females. There is no mating season and females can breed year round, giving birth to a single kid after a 7 month gestation period. Females are ready to mate again a few days after birth. Muntjac can be seen at any time of day, but are most active at dawn and dusk.

Muntjac like plenty of cover, and prefer woodlands and thickets with a dense understory. They are very adaptable however, and are commonly found in urban areas such as scrub and overgrown gardens.

Muntjac are very selective feeders, taking tender leaves from a variety of plants. Their diet includes brambles, herbs, ivy, heather and coppice shoots.

The muntjac has no real predators in the UK, although fawns are frequently taken by foxes. Road deaths are common, and due to their increase in numbers, the species is controlled by shooting in some areas.

Distribution map not yet available

Local distribution and key sites

Muntjac are expanding their range, and have now been recorded across Cornwall, although numbers are currently low.

Number of records per date class

The Reeves' Muntjac is native to China and was introduced to the UK in the latter part of the 19th Century. The species has spread widely across the UK and is rapidly increasing in number and range. They are most common in Southern England and Wales, but isolated records exist from Scotland. There are no records from Ireland.

Not under threat. Considered a pest in some areas.

Survey Methods

Road casualty reports
Direct survey and tracking
Hunt returns

Did you know?

The Reeves' muntjac takes its name from John Reeves, inspector of tea at the British East Indian Company. The first Muntjac in the UK arrived in Woburn Abbey in 1840. Deliberate releases and escapes from wildlife parks mean that they have now colonised much of southern England.

Key references

The Ecology of the Reeves' muntjac (*Muntiacus reevesi*). Deer UK (8/7/02):
http://www.deer-uk.com/muntjac_deer.htm