



EUROPEAN ROE DEER
SPAIN, Leon
APRIL 2010
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BRONZE AWARD

37

Corzo Europeo (Sp), Europaischer Rehwild (G), Chevreuil d'Europe (F). Also called **western roe deer** or **common roe deer**.

DESCRIPTION (*male*) Shoulder height 25-36 inches (64-92 cm). Weight 44-81 pounds (20-37 kg). Largest animals are found in eastern part of the species range. Females are about 20 percent smaller than males.

The smallest and most elegant native deer in Europe. Coloration is rich reddish-brown in summer, with a gray face, white chin and black muzzle band. Rump patch is obscure. Winter coat is grayish-brown, with two white throat patches and a prominent white rump patch of erectile hairs that can expand under stress to form a large white disk. Tail is small and white, invisible against the rump. A few melanistic (blackish) roe deer occur in the Netherlands and northwestern Germany, but are rare elsewhere, as are other color variations such as black-faced, albino, black and white, and brown and white. Normal antlers of a mature buck consist of a main beam directed upward, with a lower forward tine and a higher rearward tine making three points to a side. (However, non-typical antlers with 4-5 points on a side are not uncommon.) Antlers have a very rough burr (coronet) around the base, and grow so closely together that the coronets usually touch in mature animals. The skull is broad, with a compressed muzzle. The female does not grow antlers, but occasionally will grow coronets without any antler growth. In winter, females grow a prominent anal tuft of long hair that may be mistaken for a tail.

BEHAVIOR Usually solitary, but tends to form small groups in winter. During the rut in July and August, a buck will be with a single doe (unlike other deer species, which escort several) and will fight intruding males fiercely. The roe deer is the only deer species with delayed implantation, the fetal development not starting until December or January. Fawns (usually two, range is 1-3) are born



in the spring. Normal lifespan in the wild is 10-12 years, with maximum about 17 years. Roe deer are delicate in captivity, surviving only an average of 3-1/2 years, with seven years the longest recorded. Both a browser and a grazer. Active mainly at night, spending the day in cover. Senses are well developed. Excellent swimmer. Shy but curious. Both sexes have a doglike bark when alarmed. The female makes a whistling noise during mating season and to call her fawns.

HABITAT Varied. Usually woodland, especially with openings or low vegetation. Also open moors, grasslands and alpine meadows.

DISTRIBUTION Generally throughout Europe, except absent from Ireland, central England, the far north, most of Portugal, and the Mediterranean islands. Found as far east as the Don River in Russia, and perhaps even as far as the Volga River.