



Image from: [Deer in Animals: A Visual Encyclopedia](#)

Summary Article: **deer**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

ruminant mammal of the family Cervidae, found in most parts of the world except Australia. Antlers, solid bony outgrowths of the skull, develop in the males of most species and are shed and renewed annually. They are at first covered by “velvet,” a soft, hairy skin permeated by blood vessels. The stem of the antler is called the beam, and the branches are the tines. Antlers are used as weapons during breeding-season combats between bucks. In deer that lack antlers (the musk deer and Chinese river deer), long upper canines serve as weapons. Deer are polygamous. They eat a variety of herbaceous plants, lichens, mosses, and tree leaves and bark.

The white-tailed deer that live in woodlands throughout the United States and in Central America and N South America was a source of food, buckskin, and other necessities for Native Americans and white settlers. Deer flesh, called venison, is still considered a delicacy. Slaughter through the years nearly exterminated the whitetail, but it is now restored in large numbers in the E United States and to a lesser extent in the West. In summer its upper parts are reddish brown, in winter grayish. The mule deer exists in reduced numbers from the Plains region westward, and the closely related black-tailed deer is a Pacific coast form.

Old World deer include the red deer, closely related to the North American wapiti, the fallow deer, and the axis deer. The only deer in Africa are small numbers of red deer found in the north in a forested area. The barking deer, or muntjac, is a small deer of S Asia. A muntjac discovered in N Myanmar (formerly Burma) in 1997 is believed to be the smallest deer in the world. Called the leaf deer, *Muntiacus putaoensis*, it stands about 20 in. (45 cm) at the shoulder. The misleadingly named mouse deer, or chevrotain, is not a deer, but belongs to a related family (Tragulidae). Many species of deer are threatened with extinction. Deer are classified in the phylum Chordata, subphylum Vertebrata, class Mammalia, order Artiodactyla, family Cervidae.

See also caribou; elk; moose; Père David's deer; reindeer.

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

deer. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/deer>



The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018



APA

deer. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/deer>

Chicago

"deer." In *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, by Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University. 8th ed. Columbia University Press, 2018. <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/deer>

Harvard

deer. (2018). In P. Lagasse & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia*. (8th ed.). [Online]. New York: Columbia University Press. Available from: <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/deer> [Accessed 20 November 2019].

MLA

"deer." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/deer>. Accessed 20 Nov. 2019.