

Having thought further about a potential deer management policy for the parish, I feel the best approach is to limit ourselves to providing residents with information about the management approaches that are available. This avoids any accusation that the council is either for or against any particular approach, eg culling, but will help residents better understand what options are open to them. I may look into setting up or helping set up a deer management group among local stalkers, but if I do will keep this separate from my role as a councillor.

To that end I would like to suggest that from now on we include some basic information about deer in our Welcome Pack for new residents, and also create a deer page on the village website. I've attached some proposed text below, and would welcome any feedback!

Deer in Brightling

Two species of deer are endemic in our parish, roe (native to the British Isles) and the much larger fallow (an Asian species introduced here by the Romans). There are also occasional reports of muntjac, which are about the size of a middling dog. All eat a mixed diet, grazing on grass, and browsing on hedgerows, garden perennials, shrubs and young trees of pretty much any species, as well as the young of ground-nesting birds – there is not a lot a deer won't eat.

The numbers of fallow in our area are particularly high – though you'll mostly see them in small groups, it's not unusual to come across herds of 40-plus. Such high numbers lead to extensive over-browsing of local woodland understorey, preventing natural regeneration through self-seeding and meaning that new plantings require considerable protection. Fallow in Brightling can also have a significant impact on the availability of grazing for stock animals and horses, particularly in dry summers.

Deer of all species tend to access gardens and fields by pushing through narrow gaps in hedges and fences, but they are extremely agile, and both roe and fallow will happily jump over a standard 1.2ft stock fence, while a mature fallow buck can jump barriers up to 2.4m high, or 2.4m across.

Wounded deer and deer-vehicle accidents

Sadly, car accidents involving fallow are a regular occurrence in the High Weald: they have large ranges and are highly mobile, especially at night. Remember:

- If you see one deer crossing a road, it's likely more will follow it – don't swerve, slow down and wait until you're sure the road is clear.
- **If you hit and kill or wound a deer on the road, call 999.** The police and/or a registered deer warden will come out to despatch the deer and make the road safe.
- Do not approach a fallen deer with antlers, even if you think it is dead – appearances can be deceptive and a frightened animal is capable of causing you serious injury.
- If you come across a wounded or trapped deer away from public roads, do not approach it. Make an accurate note of its location (preferably using the What3Words app on your mobile), and contact a wildlife rescue service such as Folly Wildlife Rescue or Wildlife Ambulance. On private land, they will need the landowner's permission before accessing or euthanising the animal.

Advice

If you have any questions about deer and deer management options in our area, please email Councillor Lloyd on cllr.isabel.lloyd@brightling-pc.gov.uk; she will be happy to help.