

# Protecting the Sacred "Nara Deer"

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Nara Park Office

Nara Prefectural Government Tourism Bureau

In Nara Prefecture, efforts are underway to protect the "Nara Deer" with the goal of ensuring that *even 100 years from now, the deer will continue to thrive in Nara Park, just as they do today.*

## ➤ What are "Nara Deer"?

- They belong to the same species as the Japanese sika deer that live in other regions of Japan and are wild animals.
- They are protected as National Natural Monuments (cultural property).
- They have been historically protected as sacred deer of Kasuga-taisha Shrine.

■ Nara Deer are protected as sacred deer primarily in the Priority Conservation Area (Area A) and the Conservation Area (Area B) surrounding Nara Park.

- Nara Prefecture, in collaboration with Nara City and Kasuga-taisha Shrine, is advancing five primary initiatives for the protection and nurturing of the Nara Deer. This effort is carried out in partnership with the Nara Deer Preservation Foundation and the Nara Deer Support Club.
  1. In the flat area of Nara Park, designated as the Priority Conservation Area (Area A), and the forested section of Nara Park, which includes the Kasugayama Primeval Forest and is designated as the Conservation Area (Area B), as well as in urban areas, the Nara Deer Preservation Foundation takes the lead in efforts to rescue, treat, protect, and nurture:
    - Injured or sick deer
    - Deer close to giving birth
    - Fawns
  2. We are taking measures to prevent traffic accidents involving deer and automobiles.
  3. We are carrying out environmental conservation activities to prevent deer from mistakenly ingesting litter.
  4. We are conducting patrols within Nara Park and issue warnings and guidance if we discover any inappropriate behavior toward the deer.
  5. We are conducting public relations and awareness-raising activities such as distributing flyers and posters and installing digital signage to deepen and broaden understanding of the deer's ecology.

■ Based on the historical background of the "Nara Deer," efforts are aimed at fostering a better symbiotic relationship between humans and the deer. This includes promoting the correct ways to interact with them.

- Direct contact, such as riding on the back, holding, or grabbing the antlers, must not be done as this can cause unnecessary stress and harm to the deer.
- There is a possibility that parasites like ticks may be present, so direct contact should be avoided, and caution is advised.
- Do not approach female deer during the birthing season and male deer during the mating season. Also, do not approach fawns carelessly.
- Do not feed the deer anything other than "deer crackers" as this may have a negative impact on their health.
- When feeding deer crackers to the deer, please heed the following:
  - ensure that small children are accompanied by an adult
  - do not tease the deer
  - pay attention to other deer nearby
  - be mindful of your belongings.
- In the park, dogs are not allowed to run free. Dogs must always be kept on a leash (long leashes are not permitted), and any actions that might startle the deer are to be avoided.
- To prevent the deer from mistakenly eating items like paper or plastic bags, do not litter in the park and take your trash home with you.

#### (Background)

- In recent years, the rise in tourism has brought several issues to the forefront. These include incidents of people being bitten or struck by deer, negative impacts on deer health from being fed items other than deer crackers, and an increase in traffic accidents involving deer and automobiles.
- Furthermore, in July of 2024, a video surfaced showing acts of harm, such as kicking or hitting the "Nara Deer." Such actions are highly inappropriate and may violate the Act on the Protection of Cultural Properties, potentially leading to legal consequences.
- To ensure that the "Nara Deer" can continue to live safely in Nara Park and that tourists can enjoy visiting the park with peace of mind, we will demonstrate the correct way to interact with them.