

## *Herd of white deer roams Argonne campus*

Visitors to Argonne National Laboratory-East are sometimes startled by the white deer roaming the site and occasionally speculate on the nature of the experiment that produced their unusual coloring.

But the deer are perfectly normal fallow deer (*Dama dama*), a naturally light-colored species native to North Africa, Europe and parts of Asia. There are about 40 on the Argonne site.

Today's herd began with eight or nine white deer that Gustav Freund, inventor of "skinless" casings for hot dogs, received or purchased from Chicago clothier Maurice L. Rothschild. This small herd roamed Freund's country estate, part of the land that is now Argonne, and grew to 38 deer.

A heavy snowstorm in the late 1930s forced the deer to forage in the estate's fruit orchard. The Freunds preferred fresh fruit to the deer, so many were given away to parks and zoos. Those that remained were destroyed by the local game warden. All, that is, except two does. One gave birth to a buck, and the herd began to grow in number again.

Born a creamy tan with white spots, the deer become white after reaching their first year. Bucks' antlers are "palmated" - wide and flat like those of moose - and are shed each April or May. The bucks stand about four feet high at the shoulder. Bucks can use their antlers as a slashing weapon, but fights between males are mostly shoving matches in which the deer lower their heads and lock antlers. The Argonne Fire Department has been called out to separate bucks with hopelessly locked headgear.

Except for the mating season, the bucks and does maintain separate groupings. Sometimes large groups may be seen at one time in a clearing, usually in the early morning.



*WHITE DEER – About 40 white deer roam Argonne's Illinois site. They are fallow deer (*Dama dama*), a naturally light-colored species native to North Africa, Europe and parts of Asia.*

The deer roam freely on the Argonne site. Sometimes they wander through the entrances and end up as far away as Lockport, 12 miles from the laboratory, and Fermilab, 17 miles away. But most stay within the laboratory's confines. Argonne does not own the deer, or feed them.

The laboratory is also home to about 60 native white-tailed deer, commonly referred to at Argonne as "brown deer" to distinguish them from their light-colored cousins. The two species tolerate each other. They tend not to compete for food: whitetails are browsers, eating mostly leaves, while the fallow deer are grazers, partial to the abundant mown grass on the site. White-tailed and fallow deer cannot interbreed.

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