Taxonomy and genetics

The impact of hybridization between sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) on their genotype in Lithuania

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Hybridization between closely related deer species, such as sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), has become a growing concern due to its potential impacts on native genetic diversity. This study aims to identify the genotypes of hybrid individuals between these species in Lithuania using microsatellite markers to assess the extent and implications of hybridization. We analysed DNA samples from a representative population, employing a set of highly polymorphic microsatellite markers that target species-specific allelic variations. Preliminary results indicate that hybridization occurs between sika deer and red deer populations in Lithuania, revealing distinct hybrid genotypes. These findings highlight the importance of monitoring hybridization levels to preserve the genetic integrity of native red deer populations. Further research will expand on these results to develop strategies for managing and conserving deer populations affected by interspecies gene flow.