

## **Reproductive Behavior of Caspian Red Deer (*Cervus Elaphus Maral*) in Wildlife Refuge of Semeskande, Sari**

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**Abstract :** Caspian red deer or maral (*Cervus elaphus maral*) is a ruminant from the family of Cervidae. Maintenance and protection of maral requires knowing the behavioral, physiological, environmental characteristics and factors harmful to this species. In this article, reproductive and behavioral traits of this species in both sexes are presented based on observations and the available records of protected deer in Wildlife Refuge of Semeskande, Sari (one of the sites that preserve the maral in the Free Zones of Hyrcanian forest) from 2006 to 2011. Male characteristics including sexual behavior, apparent changes during reproductive season and reproductive physiology; and female characteristics including of ovulation, reproductive cycle, mating, pregnancy and parturition, have been evaluated. Identification of maral reproductive characteristics in Wildlife Refuge of Semeskande, Sari is one of the most important information requirements to preserve and breed this species and will open up new routes for performing new methods of reproduction of this species in Iran wildlife parks or other refuge areas.

**Keywords :** caspian red deer, reproduction, behavior, Iran

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