

Feral Deer

REDUCING THEIR IMPACT IN THE NORTHERN AND YORKE NRM REGION



Why are deer a problem?

Deer are gregarious mammals which tend to feed at dawn and dusk and take cover in scrub during the day. Human disturbance can cause them to become nocturnal.

Feral deer are a pest animal declared under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004.

A survey was conducted by the Natural Resources Northern and Yorke in the Jamestown to Auburn area in 2007 to gain an indication of the feral deer population numbers. The survey results which have been distributed to landholders, show that of the 274 respondents, 46% reported having a feral deer presence on their properties. Fallow deer were the predominant species (28%), followed by Red deer (9%). Nine per cent of species were recorded as unknown.

Red and Fallow deer have similar breeding cycles with mating occurring in autumn and young born in spring. Males cast their antlers in spring and they are fully regrown by late summer.

What is their impact?

Feral deer pose a threat to agriculture, the environment and public safety through:

- Damage to infrastructure caused by rubbing antlers
- Collisions with vehicles
- Competition for pasture

- Damage to native vegetation through browsing and rubbing antlers
- Impacts on native animal species through disturbance of breeding sites
- Potential disease vector for domestic livestock (Red deer can be carriers of Johne's disease or para tuberculosis, an incurable wasting disease in cattle and sheep).

Fallow deer tend to have greatest impacts on improved pastures due to their greater numbers and grazing preference. Larger species such as Reds are the greatest risk for vehicle collisions due to their size and have more impact on native vegetation due to their ability to browse.

What can you do? – Some methods of control

Under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004 landholders are responsible for the control of feral deer on their properties and are required to eradicate populations of feral deer where this is practical and feasible.

Seek assistance of Natural Resources Northern and Yorke to help you plan the control program. Control is achieved most effectively through cooperative programs, with Natural Resources Northern and Yorke coordinating many landholders at the same time. It is Natural Resources



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Northern and Yorke's intention to implement a coordinated feral deer control program in the future, in collaboration with landholders who have indicated their willingness to be contact people and to assist in the control effort.

Methods for effective control of deer are limited to shooting or trapping. Currently there are no poisons registered for use on deer. This makes broad-scale control of feral deer populations labour intensive, and brings with it the requirements for handling firearms. Feral deer must always be captured or destroyed in a humane manner. Suitable calibre firearms, projectiles and shot placement are required to ensure feral deer are destroyed humanely.

Reducing the number of female deer is the most effective strategy because it has the most impact on the reproductive ability of the herd. The effectiveness of a control program may also be improved by spotlight shooting at night. For Fallow and Red deer, the months of November and April are the best times to undertake control because of deer biology, behaviour and animal welfare considerations.

In the interest of animal welfare it is recommended that female deer not be destroyed during the period from the end of November until the end of March as this is the lactation period for females and unweaned young may be left behind after a control program.

Monitor Effectiveness

Keeping records of the number of deer that are sighted and shot on your property will provide very useful information on actual population sizes, trends in distribution and density of deer and effects of control programs. This information is also of benefit to the N&Y NRM Board in designing control programs into the future.



For more information

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