

Official Launch

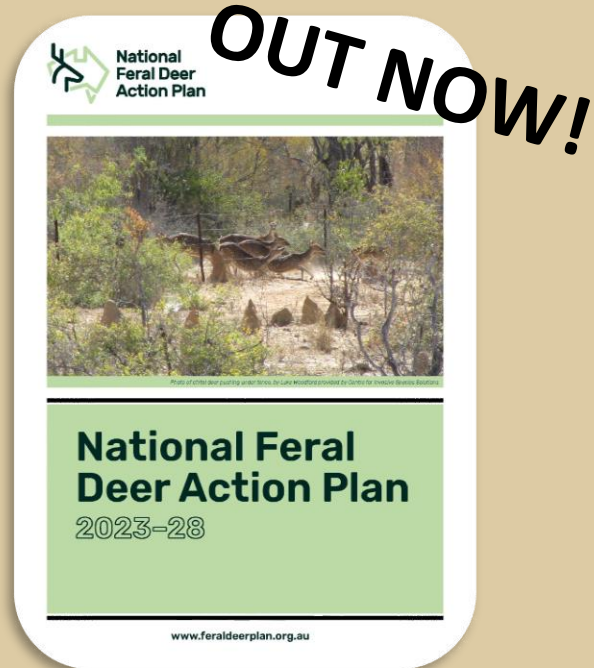
We are pleased to announce the official launch of the 2023-28 National Feral Deer Action Plan was held in Canberra on the 14th August. Thank you to everyone that have been involved in the development of the Plan, we are excited to continue working with you to implement the Plan. Read the plan [here](#)

In just 30 years, feral deer have transformed from a novelty in the landscape to a widespread and established pest in Australia. The National Feral Deer Action Plan aims to support farmers, communities, organisations, and government agencies in halting the spread and impacts of feral deer.

The Plan prioritises the need to contain large deer populations and eradicating smaller isolated groups. It also emphasises the development of new control tools to augment shooting, trapping, and fencing, while coordinating control efforts across neighbouring properties and jurisdictions.



Photo by S.Czarka



This Plan targets land management agencies, groups, organisations, governments, and land managers impacted by feral deer or likely to be affected in the near future.

Developed by a Working Group, the Plan aims to limit the expansion of feral deer into new areas and reduce their negative effects on the environment, agriculture, and communities.

The Plan also seeks to raise awareness about feral deer impacts and control options, encouraging early action on both small isolated populations and large populations in priority areas. It advocates for the development and testing of new tools, while building capacity to detect, cull, and prevent the further spread of feral deer.

Awareness Campaign

The National Deer Action Plan program ran a national social media campaign in 9 regions across Australia between 29th March - 8th May 2023. The campaign was called 'Cute but Costing Us Deerly', after successfully being piloted in 4 regions in October 2022. The pilot informed effective ways to expand the campaign in more regions.

The campaign had a nationally consistent look (see example below), with messaging targeted at raising public awareness of the existing or potential impacts of feral/wild deer to agriculture, environment and road safety. The campaign also encouraged reporting of deer sightings through DeerScan.



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us deerly.



Summary of campaign results in 9 regions in 2023:

- Social media ads reached more than 750, 000 people
- Almost 3 times more visits to the DeerScan website (reporting app)
- Video content was the most engaging and effective format



● 2022 Pilot Campaign ● 2023 Campaign



Using sambar deer genetics to inform management areas in Victoria

Chris Davies has published a [paper](#) that looks into the genetics of sambar deer in Victoria.

A lack of understanding regarding deer distribution, abundance, connectivity, and ability to spread to new areas makes the effective management of sambar deer in Victoria difficult. More research is required to investigate these aspects of sambar deer ecology and improve their management.

A molecular approach, where DNA is used to investigate the relatedness between sampled individuals, can be used to determine whether the putative populations are indeed genetically isolated and have the potential to be managed independently.

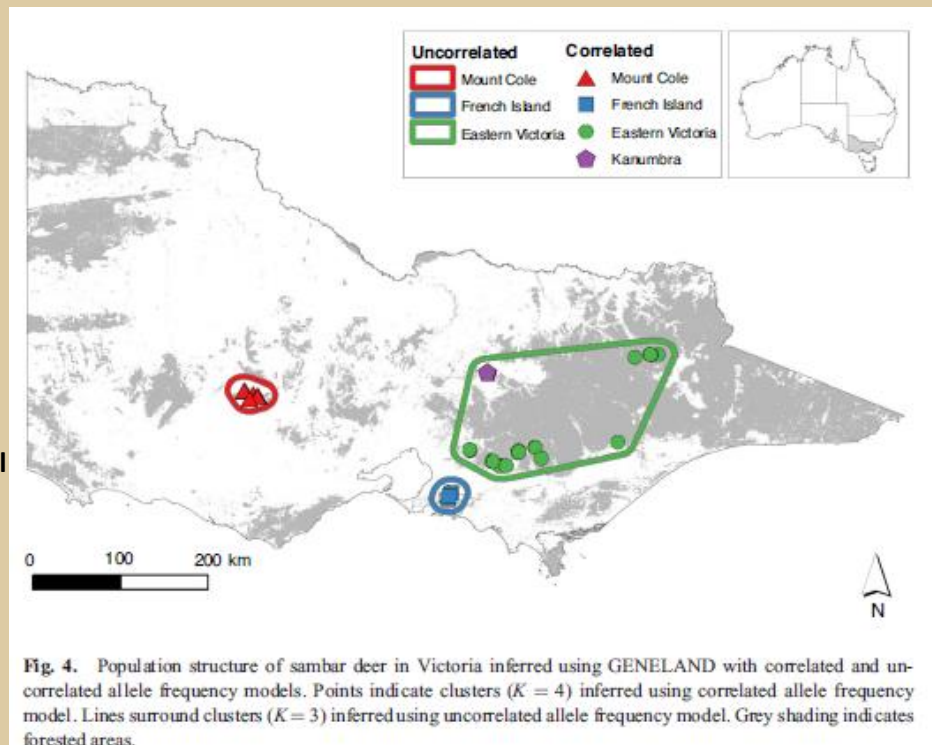
Genetic data can be used to delineate population boundaries and assess connectivity between groups. Investigating the genetic structure of animal populations, to identify individual management units, has previously been used to direct and improve eradication efforts for invasive species, including mink, stoats, and feral pigs.

Based on sambar deer occurrence records, habitat connectivity and ecology, a recent study investigating sambar deer distribution proposed four reproductively isolated populations in Victoria: eastern Victoria; Mount Cole; Timboon; and French Island.

It is likely that the four sambar deer populations proposed by Forsyth *et al.* (2015) are genetically isolated from each other, because barriers to dispersal, including large expanses of cleared land, major roads and watercourses, exist among them.

Small populations, with clear boundaries and no connectivity, represent the best opportunity for successful eradication because recruitment from other populations is unlikely to occur. Genetic data can also be used to detect dispersal pathways that could be subsequently targeted for ongoing control and surveillance.

The full paper and reference material can be viewed [HERE](#).





Browsing by non-native invasive sambar deer dramatically impacts forest structure



*Paper by: Timothy J. Wills
Richard W.R. Retallick, Joe Greet and Ami Bennett*

Highlights from a new paper ([full article here](#))

While impacts of overabundant deer have been documented around the world, there are few examples from Australia, where deer are non-native and natural predators are absent. Here, we outline the impacts of sambar deer in wet eucalypt forest understoreys of the Yarra Ranges National Park, south-eastern Australia.

In the absence of effective deer control, commonly browsed understorey trees, shrubs and tree ferns are likely to decrease substantially in cover over coming decades, potentially leading to increased light availability, drying of the understorey, and increased susceptibility to wildfire. The potential cascading ecological effects of unabated and increasing deer impacts may be substantial and pose major challenges to forest management.

Gippsland Community Deer Forum Managing deer across a landscape

A forum to help communities tackle the problem of deer around homes, farms and nature reserves was held on 26th March 2023 in Meeniyan, Victoria, to:

- Learn about the East Victoria Deer Control Plans
- Understand legal frameworks for deer control
- Hear about the work being done by community deer control groups in and outside of Gippsland
- Understand the roles of neighbours, local and state government and other land managers
- Meet people who can help land managers control deer on their property,
- Learn about control tools and equipment

The event was hosted by [Invasive Species Council](#), [Victorian Deer Control Community Network](#), and [South Gippsland Landcare Network](#). If you missed the meeting and require further information, contact info@sghn.net.au.



SSAA Farmer Assist Program

The [SSAA Farmer Assist program](#) has been developed to provide farmers and landholders with a simple way of finding qualified SSAA members to undertake shooting as part of pest control and/or conservation activities. This service is provided at no cost. You can [register here](#). Email: farmerassist@ssaa.org.au

WE WANT YOUR DEER PHOTO'S – Do you have a photo that sends a strong message, we would love to include it in feral deer awareness campaigns. Please email: coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au



The high cost of feral deer

A new report by [Centre for Invasive Species Solutions](#), [The cost of feral deer in Australia \(2023\)](#), reveals the cost to Australian agriculture and the wider Australian population as \$91.3 million in the 2021 calendar year.

The report estimated the losses to Australian agriculture in the same year at about \$69.1 million, with government funded management and research costing around \$17.8 million. The impacts on motor vehicles was estimated at around \$3.3 million, while train impacts involving deer adding a further \$1.2 million.

The Cross Tenure Feral Deer Management Project - NSW

In 2019, the NSW Government established Australia's biggest-ever feral deer study to protect farms and threatened wildlife. It aims to develop innovative, cost-effective and humane control techniques for managing feral deer. It is funded by the [NSW Environmental Trust](#).

The research team is monitoring the feral deer population and evaluating a range of humane control techniques in Kosciuszko National Park and adjoining landholder properties.

[Recent project updates](#) are available each few months.

[Subscribe to Cross Tenure Feral Deer Management Project Updates](#)

IN THE NEWS

Media Release: [NFDAP Official Launch](#)

Tasmania:

[Why will deer be shot from helicopters in a Tasmanian national park? Here is what you need to know - ABC News](#)

New South Wales:

[Push to scrap 'red tape' for deer culling | Illawarra Mercury | Wollongong, NSW](#)

[Feral animal control program continues to target deer in Werakata National Park – NSW Gov](#)

[Famers call for aerial culling in state forests as deer populations boom in NSW – ABC News](#)

[How to: garden in areas visited by deer | Growing Illawarra Natives](#)

Victoria:

[Environment and biodiversity: Victoria's feral deer population booms as push to control numbers gains momentum \(smh.com.au\)](#)

[Deer causes chaos after breaking into Melbourne home before becoming trapped - ABC News](#)

South Australia

[Eyre Peninsula locals urged to report feral deer sightings to prevent population explosion - ABC News](#)

