



©Peter Jesser

# National Feral Deer Update

From National Deer Management Coordinator Annelise Wiebkin

The successful Cute But Costing Us Deerly social media campaign was relaunched nationally during October and November. It also targeted four peri-urban areas of SA, NSW, QLD and TAS with bus billboards running over four weeks. The campaign was designed to increase awareness and reporting of feral deer, with added media in some peri-urban areas where landholder awareness is low.

In October, I attended the 2023 [NSW Vertebrate Pest Management Symposium](#) in Dubbo where 190 delegates met to hear about advances in pest animal management. Feral deer management projects and studies were the focus of eleven of the [presentations](#), reflecting the recent increase in deer management and research efforts occurring in NSW. Deer presentations focused on the movements of deer, management of pests for disease outbreaks, a new glovebox guide for deer, managing deer in urban environments, and using thermal imaging to locate feral deer. The four national vertebrate pest coordinators also caught up at the symposium to discuss technologies that have applications for a number of pest animals.

The National Feral Deer Coordination Project would like to welcome Aleesha Lesiuk to the team as the new support officer. Aleesha comes with a background in landholder engagement in the agricultural and conservation industry and she was a National Park ranger in the NT. Welcome!

(L-R) Heather Channon – National Feral Pig Management Coordinator; Gillian Basnett – National Feral Cat + Fox Coordinator; Annelise Wiebkin – National Feral Deer Management Coordinator; Greg Mifsud – National Wild Dog Management Coordinator



## In this issue:

National Feral Deer Update  
Page 01

What’s Been Happening  
Page 2 & 3

Community Deer Control  
Projects  
Page 4 - 6

Stay Informed  
Page 7

## Upcoming events

[Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference](#)  
29<sup>th</sup> July to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024  
Sydney NSW (call for abstracts and early bird tickets open now)

[Australasian Wildlife Management Society Annual Conference](#)  
5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
Melbourne Vic

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

©Peter Jesser

## New Resources from the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions

The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions have recently launched the informative new *Glovebox Guide to Managing Feral Deer*. The practical resource is designed to help Australian land managers **understand** feral deer, their impacts and behaviours; then **plan**, **manage** and **improve** a control program. The guide includes a deer management planner to help create a realistic and comprehensive personalised management plan.

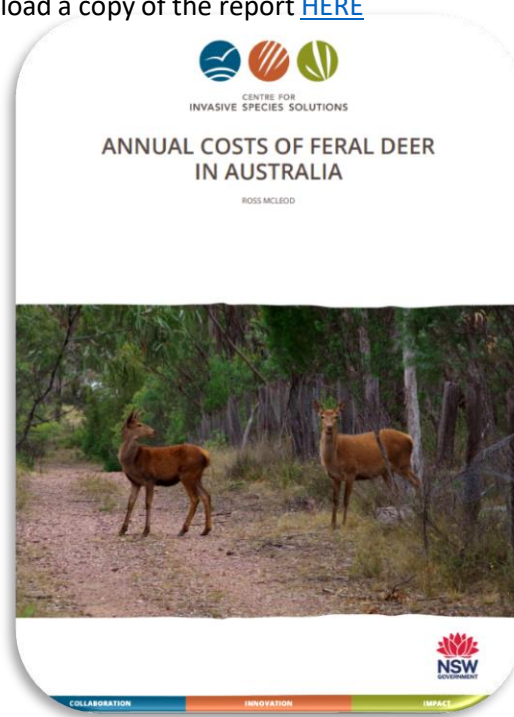
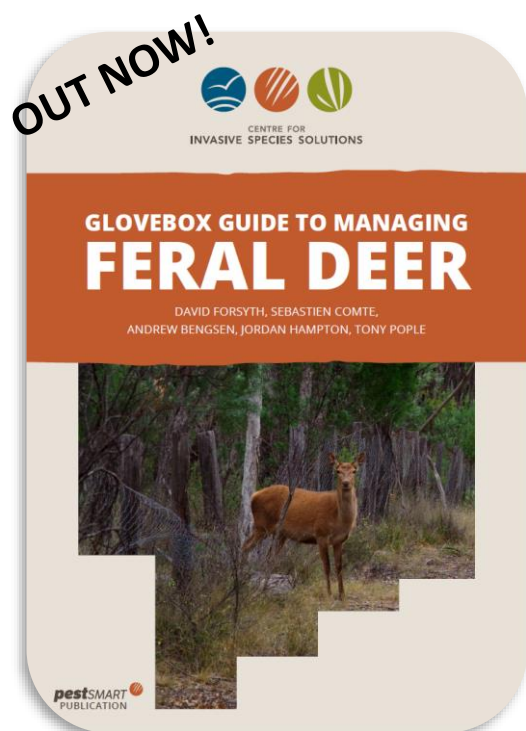
The guide uses adaptive management principals to allow land managers to tailor and adjust management actions based on learnings from implemented management practices.

Download a copy [HERE](#) or [order a hard copy](#).

The *Annual Costs of Feral Deer in Australia* report provides an estimated annual economic value of impacts deer cause in Australia. The study indicates that feral deer were responsible for an estimated annual national cost of ~\$91.3 million per year in 2021, which reflects the economic impact of feral deer relative to that of other vertebrate pests.

The report estimates an annual combined cost of feral deer control and loss of agricultural production to be \$69.1 million in 2021, while motor vehicle and train impacts with feral deer accounted for an estimated \$4.5 million. The report did not include environmental impacts, which are also likely to be considerable. Over the next decade it is predicted that these figures will increase unless major strategic management programs are implemented nationally.

Download a copy of the report [HERE](#)



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](mailto:coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au)

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING



©Peter Jesser

### Successful workshops drive progress in South Australian feral deer eradication program

#### Department for Primary Industries and Regions and Landscapes SA

Two recent workshops attracted over 30 representatives from diverse sectors across South Australia to build a shared commitment to eradicate feral deer. The workshops brought together voices from Landscape Boards, Councils, National Parks and Wildlife, SA Water, Department for Primary Industries and Regions, Department for Environment and Water, prominent property owners and industry.

On day one, the focus was on the state-wide 10-year eradication approach through the launch of the [Strategic Plan for the South Australian Feral Deer Eradication Program 2022-32](#). The day included discussions on the current status of eradication programs, potential improvements, and plans for the future. Although there is still a long way to go, participants expressed excitement about the achievements made over the past 12 months. Efforts included 23 weeks of aerial shooting and targeted ground shooting, which removed ~11,000 feral deer.

On the second day, the workshop sought to create a local strategy for feral deer management in the peri-urban areas around Adelaide. The group learned about the need to reduce populations early. They heard about successes from other programs in eastern Australia, and they explored suitable management tools. The workshop also collated participants' knowledge of the local deer distribution, identified priority areas for eradication, and pinpointed suitable community engagement methods. Discussion focused on how to build social license, gain access to enough small adjoining parcels of land for control, and select tools and strategies for residential areas.

A local peri-urban strategy will be developed soon, which may also be useful for other regions around Australia planning peri-urban programs.



Share your  
feral deer  
program or  
community  
engagement  
success story!

WE WANT YOUR DEER IMPACT PHOTO'S – Do you have a photo that sends a strong message, that we could use in awareness campaigns. Please email: [coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au](mailto:coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au)

# COMMUNITY DEER CONTROL PROJECT



## Eating the problem: pest to plate

### Tarwin Landcare Group Project (Victoria)

The Tarwin Landcare Group's (TLG) held a Pest to Plate workshop in October, where 30 people (from novices through to experienced hunters) learnt new skills in skinning, gutting and butchering fallow deer. Game Management Authority's (GMA) Dr Jason Fleisch demonstrated to participants how to assess the animal for signs of disease or ill health and how to hygienically field dress the carcass. Jason showed the participants how to butcher the carcass, explaining the different meat cuts and their eating quality. The participants then had an opportunity to practice their new skills on three fallow deer harvested by volunteer shooters and a local landholder. Participants created a variety of venison sausages, which they enjoyed on the BBQ afterwards.

The workshop is one of many activities run by TLG to increase engagement, skills and knowledge of landholders around the Cape Liptrap Coastal Park Victoria, where impacts of feral deer need to be reduced. TLG have collaborated with individuals and agencies with skills and knowledge to help landholders control deer populations. This has included partnering with volunteer shooters and commercial harvesters and hearing from experts like GMA on safe and responsible removal of deer.

TLG President, Jillian Staton, said "Our landholders have built strong relationships with the hunters who come out regularly to help manage deer, and foxes and rabbits as well. We're definitely seeing less deer at the moment and several farmers have reported increased lambing percentages which is a bonus."

For more information about TLG's community-controlled deer management program, contact Jenny O'Sullivan on 0419 153 377 or [leapjos@gmail.com](mailto:leapjos@gmail.com). TLG runs a variety of environmentally-focussed activities and welcomes new members: email [tarwin@group.sgl.net.au](mailto:tarwin@group.sgl.net.au) for details.



# COMMUNITY DEER CONTROL PROJECT



## Cameras help count deer in Tasmania

### Game Services Tasmania Project

Fallow deer were introduced to Tasmania in the 1830s for recreational hunting. In the last decade or so, the deer population has surged, causing environmental, social, and economic damage. In response to this, the Tasmanian Government developed a [Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan](#). Outside of the 'sustainable hunting zone' (Zone 1, see map page 6), Game Services Tasmania have been working to estimate deer numbers and new distributions in priority control areas using a census, aerial surveys, FeralScan reports from the community, and camera traps. Priority control areas were chosen based on the threats of deer to conservation, farm livelihoods, and public risk. The population estimates will be used to guide strategies to eradicate deer in priority areas.

#### Cameras in action

Game Services Tasmania deployed 200 trail cameras across 13 locations, spaced 500-700m apart for three months in groups of 30 to 40. The Swift 3C cameras were equipped with 24/7 movement and heat sensors, to capture images of deer along with birds, reptiles, and Tasmanian devils. The Queensland University of Technology analysed over 2 million images using machine learning and R software, to estimate deer abundance. At one priority area, Arthur's Lake, cameras were used to estimate a local population of 130 deer (0.09/hectare) from 719 independent observations of deer. The study also revealed that forests were preferred habitats for the deer.

The project staff advised that the accuracy of density estimates can be maximised with standard camera settings, careful placement of cameras with refence pegs placed at 6m from each camera, good data recording systems, and by ensuring vegetation did not grow up directly in front of cameras. While the project's focus is on counting deer, their data may hold future value for studies on other species.



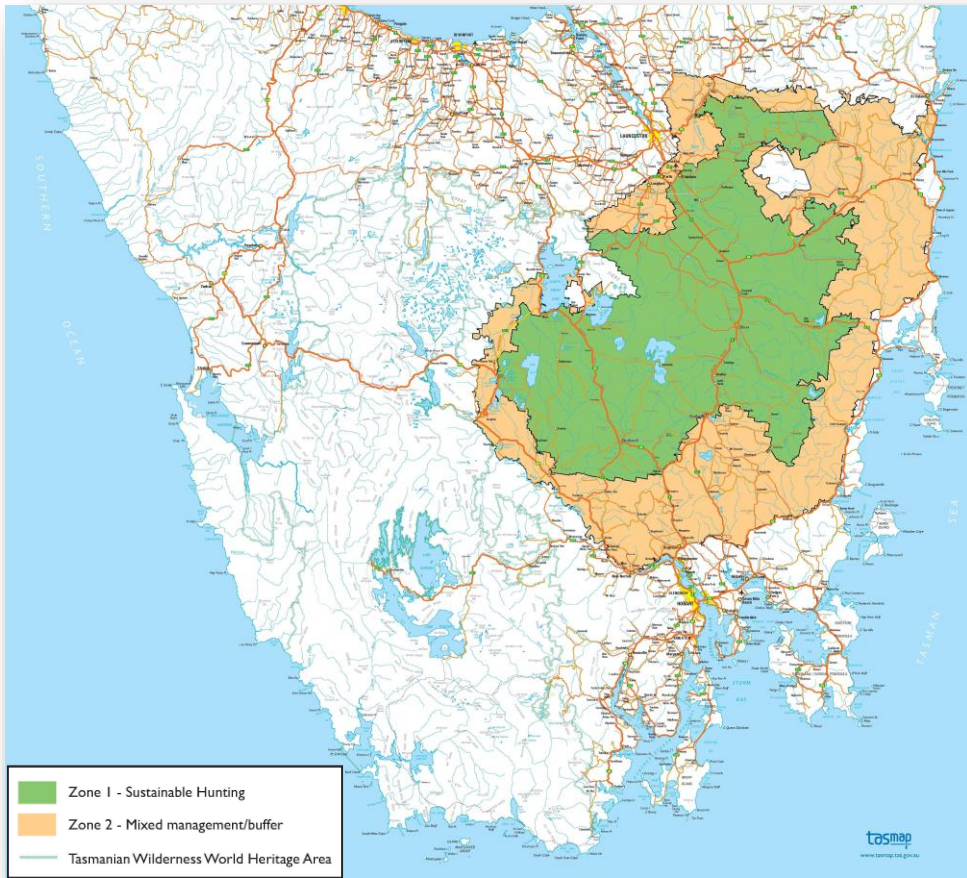
WE WANT YOUR DEER IMPACT PHOTO'S – Do you have a photo that sends a strong message, that we could use in awareness campaigns. Please email: [coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au](mailto:coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au)

# COMMUNITY DEER CONTROL PROJECT



## Cameras help count deer in Tasmania

### Game Services Tasmania Project



WE WANT YOUR DEER IMPACT PHOTO'S – Do you have a photo that sends a strong message, that we could use in awareness campaigns. Please email: [coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au](mailto:coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au)

## STAY INFORMED



©Peter Jesser

## Pests and Weeds on the Rise

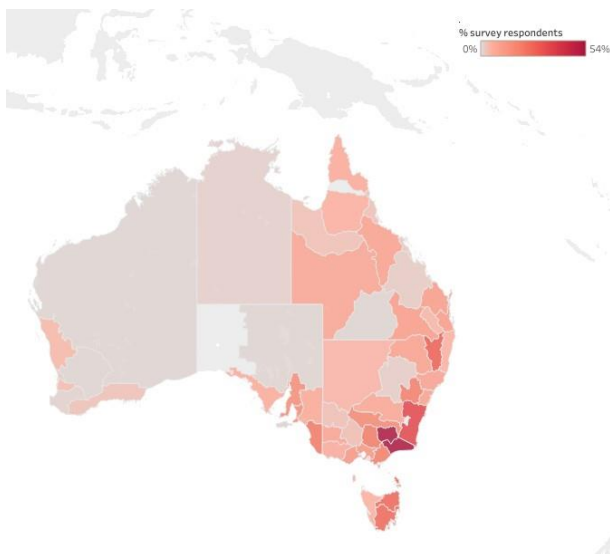
The ABARES Pest Animal and Weed Management Land Manager Survey was [released](#) in October showing that 85% of land managers spent on average \$21,950 in 2022 on pest and weed species management.

The survey saw an increase in new reports of feral deer on properties, and an increase in numbers, creating more damage.

An interactive [Dashboard](#) of the 2016 to 2019 survey results is available (pictured right), showing data across 11 pest and weed related questions. Keep an eye out for the 2022 results to be available later this year.

In Victoria, in the North East region, 41% of surveyed landholders reported a major problem with feral deer on their property, followed closely by 37% of landholders in East Gippsland.

The results indicate the effectiveness of control measures for feral deer over a 12 months period in 2019 range from not effective to a little effective.



Map above shows the proportion of surveyed landholders in each region reporting major or minor problems with feral deer on their property in a 12 month period from the 2019 survey.

## In the News and Literature

[Essential, effective, humane: New data reveals over 239,000 feral animals removed with aerial shooting in NSW in past 3 years.](#)

[Feral deer, pigs populate Victoria's Otways with eradication a long, laborious journey.](#)

[Wildlife Research: Special Issue, Ecology and Management of Wild Deer in Australia.](#) The special issue provides new information about ecology, impacts and management of wild/feral deer through 14 research papers. Sponsored by Centre for Invasive Species Solutions and NSW Department of Primary Industries.

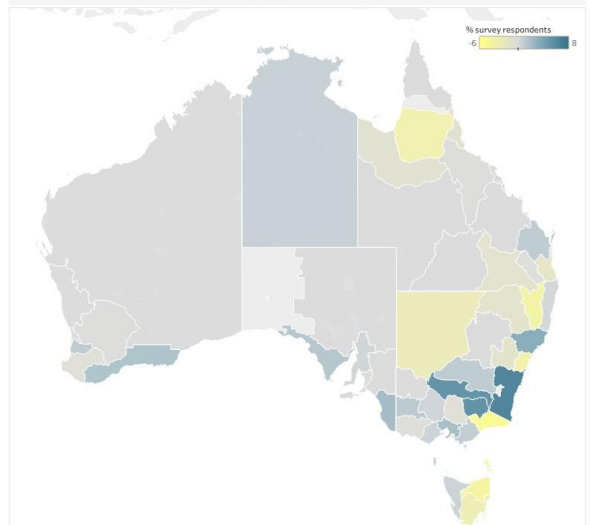
[Cost of established pest animals and weeds to Australian agricultural producers](#)

### ABARES pest animal and weed management land manager survey 2016-2019

3. Methods of pest and weed control being used	4. Effectiveness of control methods	5. Proportion of land managers reporting any spend on contr..	6. Expenditure and effort on pest and weed management	7. Proportion of land managers participating in..
Choose NRM region(s) All				State All
Choose species group Feral deer		Choose units any expenditure		Choose survey year 2016-2019

#### Comparison analysis map of change in the % survey respondents reporting any expenditure on control activities relating to feral deer over the period 2016-2019, by NRM region

Expenditure includes costs of traps, baits, pesticides/insecticides, fuel, fencing materials and labour including costs of contractors. Effort spent by family/owners includes the days spent on management actions by the owner/operators, including family members. Effort spent by contractors includes the days spent on management actions by contractors, employees and other persons (eg volunteers).



© 2023 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Sample numbers are insufficient for NRM regions of Cooperative Management Area (DL) and Alinytjara Wilurara (SA) so these estimates are not presented. Australian Capital Territory, Torres Strait and the external territory natural resource management regions were not sampled but several surveys were received through an open online survey. There were 158 responses to the 2019 survey where no NRM region nor postcode was able to be assigned. These were not presented at regional or state level, but are included in national level estimates.