

NATIONAL FERAL DEER ACTION PLAN



2023-24 SNAPSHOT

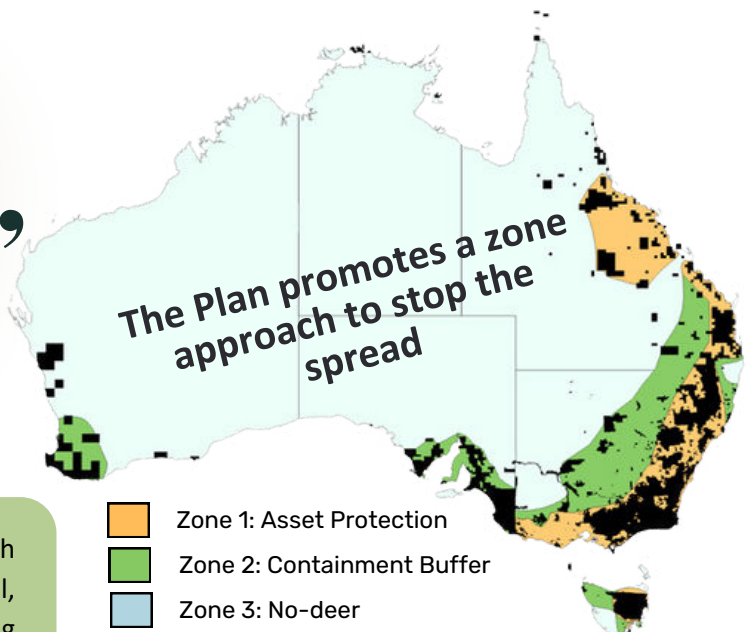
Across Australia, feral deer (known as *wild* deer in Tasmania and Victoria) have increased in numbers and spread to a point where current control efforts have limited effectiveness. The National Feral Deer Action Plan (Plan) 2023 -28 was developed to reverse these trends. The Plan aims to enhance tools, strategies, capacity, and awareness to reduce the impact of feral deer to acceptable levels, and to eradicate them where feasible.

The Plan aims to support and guide land management agencies, groups and organisations, governments, and land managers who are impacted by feral deer, or are likely to be impacted soon. The National Deer Management Coordinator Program, funded by the Australian Government, facilitates and pulls our efforts together to drive the Plan.



“We have a tight window of opportunity to deal with feral deer now, and save the next generation millions every year”

Dr Annelise Wiebkin - National Deer Coordinator



The Plans Goals

The Plan takes an aspirational, multifaceted approach to reduce the impacts of feral deer on agricultural, environmental, cultural and social assets, by focusing on three goals:

1. Prevent the spread of large feral deer populations and minimise their impact. (Zone 1)
2. Control or eradicate small, isolated feral deer populations before they spread. (Zone 2 + 3)
3. Prioritise and protect important sites, from impacts of feral deer, including threatened species, ecological communities, and areas of national cultural or environmental significance.

Through

- Research and innovation
- Awareness and capacity building
- Coordination and collaboration



Farmers are fed up with deer. They are costing us \$69 million in lost production and \$4.5 million in car and train crashes. The Plan is instrumental in halting these costs

-Ted Rowley - Independent chair of the NFDAP Committee and producer

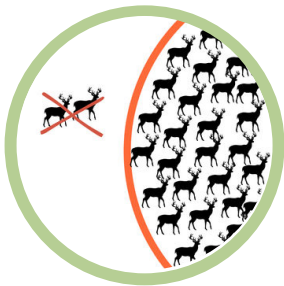
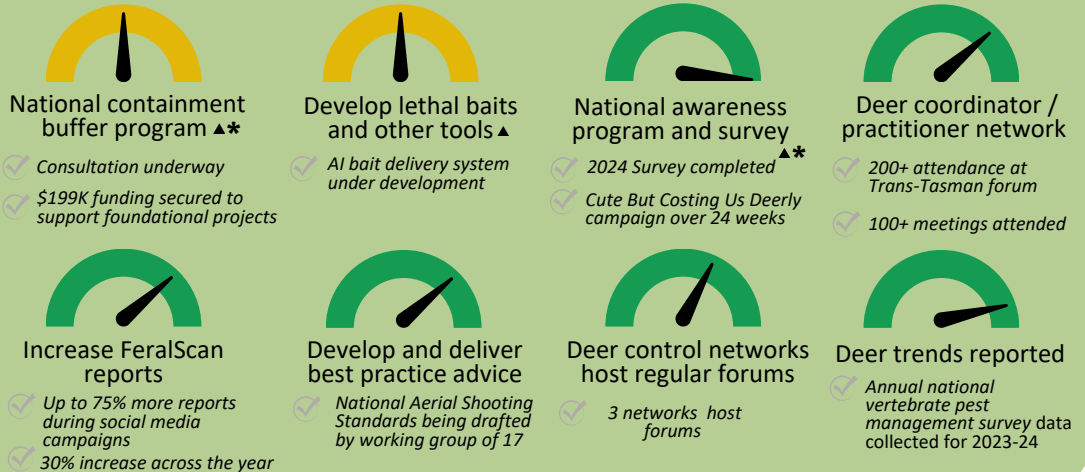


One year on (2023-24)

The Plan has 22 actions over five years. This snapshot highlights measures taken in 2023-24 towards these actions. Achievements exceeded annual performance targets for 70 per cent of the planned activities (green measures below), and are on track for the other activities (yellow measures below). *Example achievements in italics below*



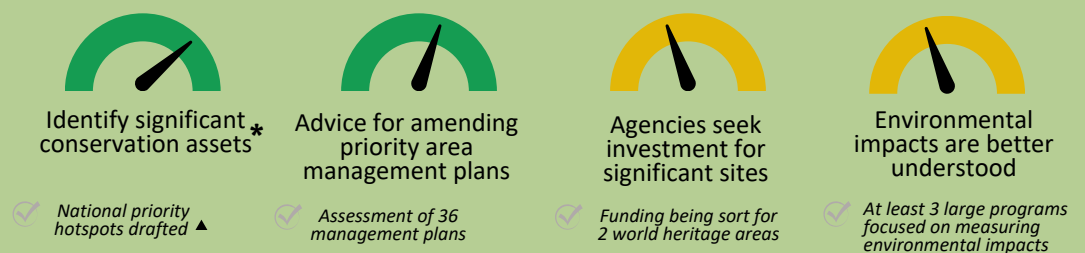
Stop the spread of large populations and reduce their impacts



Control or eradicate small populations before they spread



Protect significant sites from impacts



* Ongoing

▲ Further work planned in 2025

Thermal Assisted Aerial Culling

Supporting delivery of the Plan: The Coordinator Program 2023-24

Engagement and Capacity

(dots relate to map)

- 8 Large workshops, webinars and conferences
- 25 Local workshops and webinars
- 100+ presentations, meetings and site visits
- 24 weeks of social media and bus back campaigns (including 7 state wide campaigns)
- 5 trail camera surveillance projects supported
- 10 Land holder workshops (planned or completed)
- 4 Collaborative groups
- 4 Local/state deer management programs commenced

New tools and processes

- 10 locations collecting dam water samples, to develop an eDNA process to detect deer in low density populations.
- 3 trials of thermal assisted aerial culling (see highlight)
- Supporting development of lethal bait for a deer-specific delivery device.
- Development of national aerial shooting minimum standards (across Australia)

Trial Highlights

The Coordinator Program trialled the first **Thermal Assisted Aerial Cull (TAAC)** for fallow and red deer in 2021. After promoting the benefits and facilitating discussion, adoption has now **soared to 18 weeks of landscape-scale TAAC operations** in 2024 across 5 states, on private and public land. Part of this included improving strategy for TAAC by co-investing in the 3 trials below:

1 Does thermal tech work in warm climates?

A trial in Central Queensland's tropical savanna tested TAAC's thermal limits, showing promise for effectively detecting and reducing chital deer, with potential applications further north. The project was a collaboration between the Coordinator Program, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (now DPIQ), and Whitsunday Regional Council.

The Coordinator Program enabled our **game-changing trial of TAAC** in warm climates - it exceeded our expectations

Bren Fuller - Whitsunday Regional Council

The Victorian Deer Control Community Network's activities link and align with the Plan. We fully support the Plan because it encourages collaboration and partnerships across the different states, which strengthens our aims and goals

Johannes Wenzel - VDCCN

2 Finding needles in a haystack - and eradicating them

TAAC flight strategies were trialled to **eliminate sparse, isolated populations** in expansive bushland. Transects, that covered all areas were most effective.

We're grateful for the Coordinator Programs support, from sharing knowledge and setting up cameras to guiding our communication and action plans. Over 2 years, we've learned so much and are thrilled with our progress

Jenny O'Sullivan - Cape Liptrap Deer Group

3 Forestry canopies

- how thick is too thick for TAAC to penetrate?

The Coordinator Program partnered with HVP Plantations to trial TAAC with ground control to reduce deer herbivory by fallow and sambar deer in plantations of varying ages. Future strategies aim to protect commercial timbers particularly at early growth stages.

The Coordinator Program supported HVPs first TAAC operation to help **protect our private commercial plantations**- an exciting and effective tool for reducing deer in the forestry landscape

Amy Kirk - HVP Plantations

Deer seen through Thermal



Supporting delivery of the Plan: The Coordinator Program 2023-24

The Coordinator Program seeks to involve all Australians in building social licence, awareness and increased best practice knowledge to act early to the emerging threats of feral deer. Highlights include:



Awareness Campaigns



Reaching over 1.2 million social media users so far



Sparking 3,200 comments



80,000 clicks to DeerScan website



Across 7 states



“The Coordinator Program has **promoted our regional eradication efforts**, and helped drive local support through awareness campaigns”

Steve Bourne - General Manager, Limestone Coast Landscape Board



Building Best Practice Capacity

“I valued the emphasis on building social licence and strategies to do so”
Conference Attendee

“Thank you for organising involvement from across the country”
Conference Attendee

“The Coordinator Program workshops have renewed and invigorated conversations about deer in Tasmania”
Workshop Attendee

Attendees scored the conference 9/10 (average)



National Feral Deer Conference 2023 and the National Aerial Shooting Workshop 2024 each saw over 80 professionals attend from across Australia.

“It was fantastic to see so many organisations, ENGO's and Local Councils attend the forum to share and learn about effective management of deer”

Workshop Attendee



The National Coordinator Annelise Wiebkin and Support Officer Aleesha Lesiuk after presenting at the 19th Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference 2024

Surveys and Videos

“The awareness videos are a great way to engage communities about the impact of feral deer across our landscapes”

A survey of 1200 Australians found



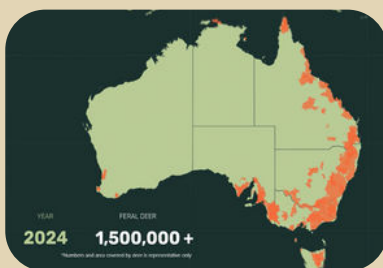
40 percent are unaware feral deer are in Australia



50 percent aware deer are introduced



Traffic accidents were the greatest concern



The Coordinator Program developed videos to respond to low awareness of Australians.



Tony Buckmaster - Principle RD&E Manger, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions



Next steps

- Build awareness of deer impacts to 2 million people
- Promote Deerscan to see a 30 percent increase in users
- More best practice guides and support
- Increase national acceptance and uptake of lethal control practices
- Seek funding for the containment buffer zone program
- Support the establishment 5 peri-urban programs
- Support an increase in control programs nationally