

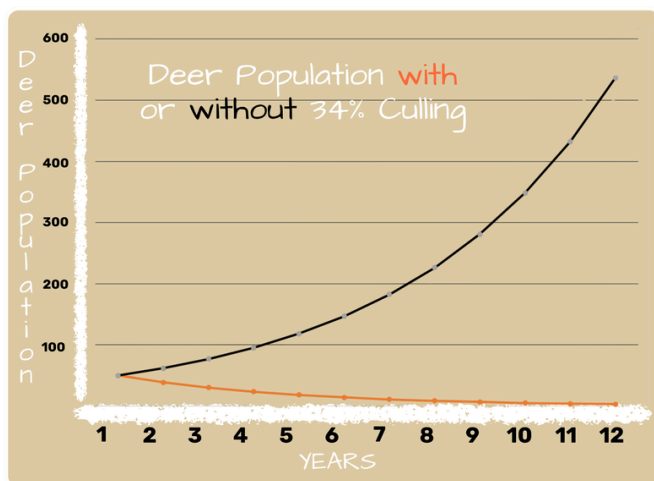
A LAND MANAGER'S guide to controlling feral deer



National
Feral Deer
Action Plan



Feral deer are expanding in range and density across much of Australia. Land managers have a key responsibility to help reduce the impact to their land and protect from disease transmission by controlling feral deer and other vertebrate pests. Taking early, coordinated action across boundaries is essential, as reducing deer populations by over 34% annually is needed to prevent rapid population growth and minimise future control efforts.



“If you see a deer, shoot it, don't take the kids to look at it, don't take a photo, just shoot it. Once you see one, you already have a deer problem.”

Farmer Ted Rowley -
Independent chair of the
NFDAP Committee



Photo: Peter Jesser



How Can You Help?

Adopt these principles and practices to remove feral deer to boost farm productivity, protect your community, and preserve native bushland.



Remove more females

Prioritise the removal of female feral deer, because they drive populations to grow.



Report sightings to DeerScan

Report sightings and signs of feral deer through the free [DeerScan](#) website or app to help inform where management is needed.



Remove 35 to 50% of the population

Aim to remove more feral deer than the number born in the area each year – use 35 to 50% of the population annually (depending on the deer species) as a guide.



Joint efforts

Work with your neighbours to manage deer across boundaries by controlling deer at the same time and employing the same shooter to work across multiple properties at once. This ensures feral deer cannot seek harbour and breed up.



Form a community group

Join or form a community feral deer control group to share ideas, resources and take action. Some states have networks like the [Victorian Deer Control Community Network](#).



Learn how to use control tools

Get your firearm licence and improve your deer control skills by asking experienced people in your community. Use spotlights, thermal scopes or binoculars to ensure humane and efficient shooting (check local and state laws [HERE](#)). [More information](#)



Act early

Act Early - remove small numbers when you first see them, resulting in less impacts and effort in the future. Regular efforts are more effective than ad hoc control or occasional hunting for meat harvest.



Share your wins

Share what you have learnt with other farmers to help them tackle the impacts. Share your knowledge by chatting to likeminded neighbours and sending stories into your local farming groups.



Seek a helping hand

Reduce deer numbers by seeking help from programs like Farmer Assist or trusted volunteer shooting networks. Clearly communicate your expectations and property rules to volunteer shooters.

Grape vines eaten by feral deer

Feral Deer Control Tools



Ground shooting

Ground shooting is best when used with a thermal scope and sound moderator (where allowed) to reduce small numbers at property scales.

Learn more [HERE](#)



Thermal tools

Thermal technology involving cameras, drones, binoculars and scopes (along with improved telescopic sights) are enhancing accuracy of surveillance and control efforts.

Learn more [HERE](#)



Aerial culling

Shooting from helicopters is a highly effective method to rapidly reduce large numbers of feral deer across multiple properties or expansive areas. Learn more [HERE](#)



Exclusion fencing

To effectively exclude or alter the movement of feral deer, fencing needs to be a minimum of 1.9m high, with sturdy posts, mesh secured to the ground and strainer wires to maintain tension. Learn more [HERE](#)



Commercial Harvester

Harvesting of meat for consumption can be an effective first step in control programs until harvesting is no longer viable, and when landholders can manage the remaining numbers themselves. Learn more [HERE](#)



Trapping

Deer traps are useful where shooting is impractical, especially in urban areas. Traps can use remote-activated doors, with temporary or permanent large or small yards. Learn more [HERE](#)

The National Feral Deer Action Plan

The [National Feral Deer Action Plan](#) (2023-28) seeks to actively stop the spread, suppress, or eradicate Australian feral deer populations. This aims to reduce the impacts of feral deer on farming assets, our native bushland and animals, cultural areas and accidents with motorists. The Plan encourages land managers to implement humane and effective management approaches aligned with [national guidelines](#). It's important that sufficient feral deer are removed at the right scales and places to lead to long-lasting relief from impacts to fencing, pastures, crops and disease risks.

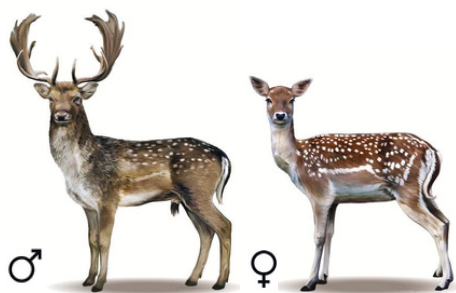
Brett - Farmer from
South Australia



“The feral deer are your unofficial grazing herd, you don't know what head their carrying or how much they are consuming so your stock ratios are constantly being effected by the impacts of these feral animals.”

Feral Deer Identification Guide

FALLOW DEER (DAMA DAMA)



	MALE (BUCK)	FEMALE (DOE)
HEIGHT	Up to 95 cm	Up to 80 cm
WEIGHT	60-100 kg	40-50 kg
ANTLERS	Flattened antlers up 50 cm with numerous points.	
DESCRIPTION	Highly variable in colour including red, black, white and menil (spotted). Heart shaped pale rump patch with black outline. Long tail.	

Males have: Penile sheath, Adams apple

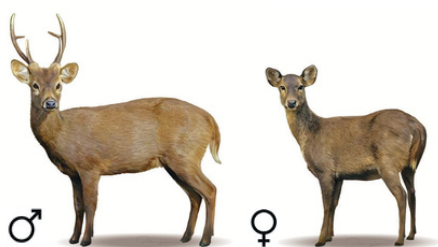
CHITAL DEER (AXIS AXIS)



	MALE (BUCK)	FEMALE (DOE)
HEIGHT	Up to 95 cm	Up to 80 cm
WEIGHT	60-100 kg	40-50 kg
ANTLERS	Flattened antlers up 50 cm with numerous points.	
DESCRIPTION	Highly variable in colour including red, black, white and menil (spotted). Heart shaped pale rump patch with black outline. Long tail.	

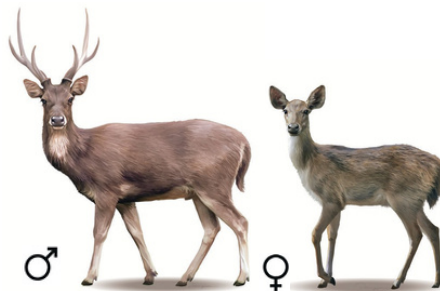
Males have: Penile sheath, Adams apple

HOG DEER (AXIS PORCINUS)



	MALE (STAG)	FEMALE (HIND)
HEIGHT	Up to 70 cm	Up to 60 cm
WEIGHT	55 kg	30 kg
ANTLERS	Usually three points on each side, thin up to 35 cm	
DESCRIPTION	Uniform yellow-brown to red-brown coat. May have white spots in summer and a dark brown coat in winter. Underside is white/cream. Smallest deer species in Australia.	

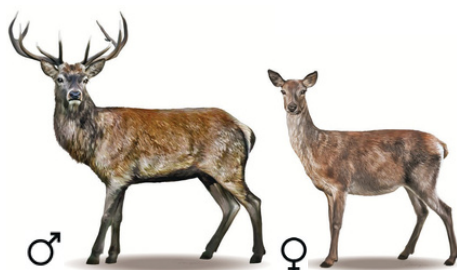
RUSA DEER (CERVUS TIMORENSIS)



	MALE (STAG)	FEMALE (HIND)
HEIGHT	Up to 110 cm	Up to 95 cm
WEIGHT	135 kg	90 kg
ANTLERS	Antlers three lyre-like tines. Up to 96 cm	
DESCRIPTION	Coat is coarse. Heavy dark grey-brown during winter. Reddish-brown during summer with light chest and throat spots.	

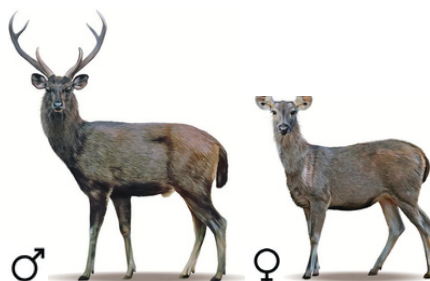
Males have: Mane

RED DEER (CERVUS ELAPHUS)



	MALE (STAG)	FEMALE (HIND)
HEIGHT	Up to 120 cm	Up to 90 cm
WEIGHT	135-220 kg	95 kg
ANTLERS	Multi-pointed coplex up to 90cm	
DESCRIPTION	Large pale rump patch. Ears are normally long and pointed. Grey-brown in winter. Reddish in colour during summer. Short tail. Calves have distinct white spots.	

SAMBAR DEER (CERVUS UNICOLOR)



	MALE (STAG)	FEMALE (HIND)
HEIGHT	Up to 160 cm	Up to 115 cm
WEIGHT	300 kg	230 kg
ANTLERS	Lyre-like, 3 tines per antler up to 70 cm.	
DESCRIPTION	Prominent bat like ears with pale inner. Uniform dark brown coat with ginger and cream under-parts and light buff colour under chin. Uniform. Hair is very stiff and coarse.	