



DEER MANAGEMENT INFO PACK FOR PRIVATE LANDHOLDERS



SOUTH GIPPSLAND DEER ACTION GROUP

June 2022

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DISCLAIMER

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PURPOSE OF THIS INFORMATION

This digital information pack has been compiled following matters raised at community meetings on deer in the first half of 2022 at Mt Best and Cape Liptrap in South Gippsland. These events highlighted the severe impacts deer are having on farm assets, including pasture, orchards, fences and water quality. Deer are also having a big impact on biodiversity, where they totally change the understorey of forested areas by feeding on understorey and ground-cover plants, rubbing their antlers and opening up the forest by their sheer size and numbers. Presentations (available on request) by guest speakers highlighted that deer numbers are very likely to be much higher than we think, and sightings should be reported via the Feral (Deer) Scan phone app (or website) to better estimate deer numbers in the area.

We also learned that shooting is the best form of deer control. However landholders have concerns regarding illegal shooting and need a set of guidelines to confidently engage recreational shooters and ensure safe and responsible practices are followed. We learnt that recreational shooting efforts need to greatly increase if we are to stop the rapid increase in deer numbers. So ultimately we all need to work together (shooters, landholders and the wider community) to manage feral deer in a sustained fashion over the long-term.

This set of information is a resource to help landholders better understand and deal with deer on their land AND not to underestimate the impacts deer will increasingly have if not controlled.

We warmly thank-you all for being involved in our efforts thus far, and hope this information can be of help. If you have comments on this document please email nick.stephens@sgln.net.au

DEER STATS AND FACTS

Species

There are up to 4 species of deer in South Gippsland, all with different behavior and characteristics. Sambar, Fallow, Red and Hog Deer. An outline of each was provided in the take-home notes from the March 2022 Mt Best meeting (available on request), or can be seen here: <https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/deer/game-deer-species>

Growth

- Deer breed once a year, usually producing one young but sometimes having twins or triplets
- Deer populations double
 - Every 2 years with no control
 - Every 3 years with 30% male only control
 - Every 5 years with 30% mixed ratio of male: female control
- Left uncontrolled in good conditions, feral deer populations can increase by 34–50% every year. **Therefore, to maintain a current population, 34-50% of the population must be culled every year**
- Populations are increasing exponentially
 - 1980 – estimated 20,000
 - 2002 – estimated 500,000
 - 2021 – estimated 1-2 million
- Populations are spreading
 - Feral deer have almost doubled their range in the past 20 years.
 - Today they cover around ¼ of NSW and TAS and around 1/3 of VIC
 - If we map suitable habitat and climate in Australia, we find that feral deer have potential to occupy more than half of Australia

- Populations increase after bushfires
 - Females birth at 18 months instead of at 3 years (anecdotal)

Deer Impacts

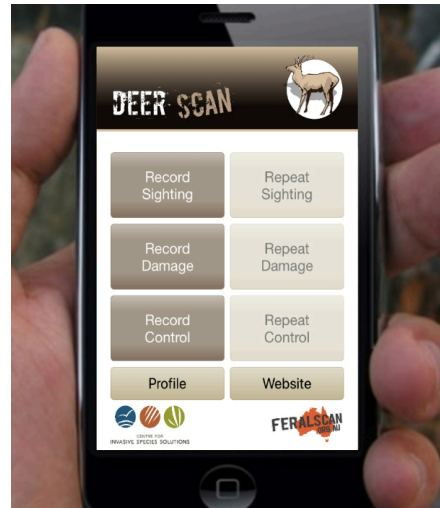
- Feral deer consume 1.8 to 3.6 times that of sheep (DSE) depending on the species.
- Areas exposed to high densities of feral deer have 30-70% less understorey
- Exclusion fences have 80% more native trees inside
- At least 105 species of plants can be found in feral deer diets
- Feral deer have potential to impact more than half (53%, or 468 species) of the threatened plant species within their distribution.
- 2500-2900 deer in Royal National Park, NSW consumes 47 million tonnes of plant material per year, three-quarters of which is native
- Deer consume 4x plant material/day as adult swamp wallabies
- Deer are the fourth most hit animal in Victoria (after kangaroos, wombats, and dogs)

Other information on deer such as species and identification can be found in the handout from the March 2022 Mt Best Info Night. Available on request from SGLN.



SHOOTING 1 OR 2 DEER EVERY NOW AND THEN IS NOT ENOUGH TO CONTROL THE RAPID INCREASE AND IMPACT OF DEER. YOU SHOULD AIM TO SHOOT AS MANY FEMALES AS POSSIBLE AND SUSTAIN THIS EFFORT.

RECORDING DEER USING FERAL SCAN



Deer have become a management problem across the whole State of Victoria. While people in South Gippsland are seeing more and more deer, the region is not considered as having a significant deer population/ problem. This does not help our case when we are applying for funds and other government resources to combat deer. We are therefore trying to improve this situation by recording deer sightings, deer damage and/or control efforts using the Feral Scan website or phone app.

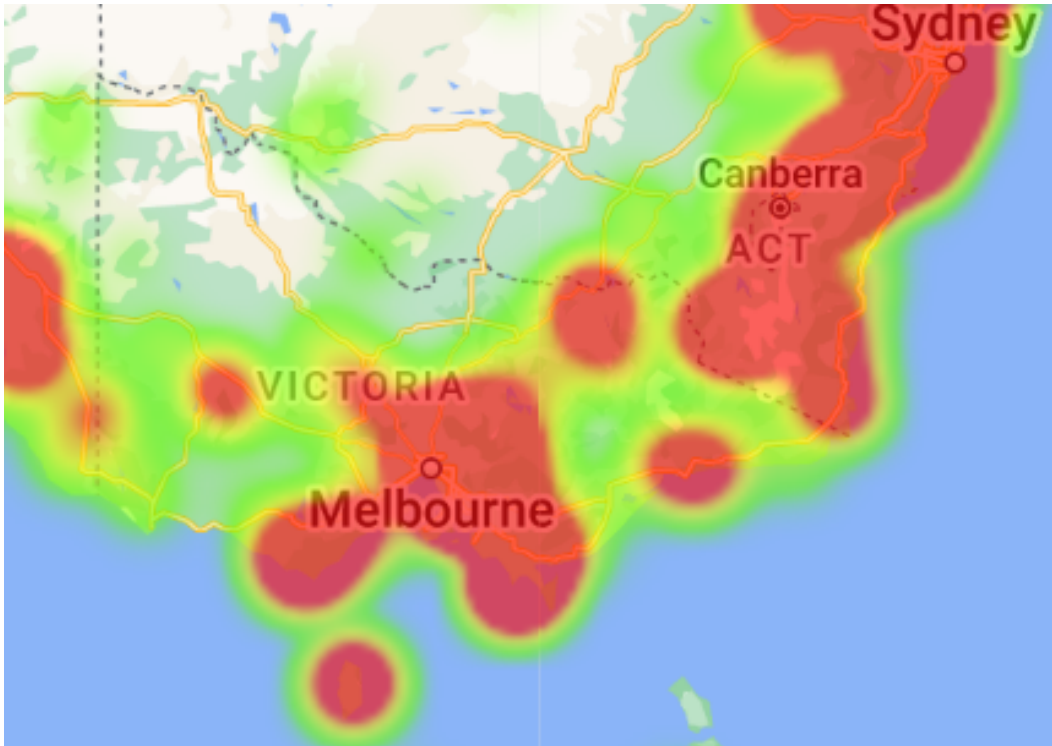
The easiest way to use Feral Scan is to download it onto your mobile. When you use your phone it will automatically record the location of the deer sighting. If you're lucky enough to get a photo you can submit that as well. Feral Scan can also be used to record the numbers of deer shot during control efforts. We have included this as a condition in the shooter permission agreement.

FOLLOW THESE LINKS FOR FURTHER INFO ON USING FERAL SCAN:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXLjrcnf-zM&t=97s>

<https://www.feralscan.org.au/deerscan/default.aspx>

NOTE: There has been some reluctance to use the Feral Scan app in fear of attracting illegal shooters, however, the data cannot be viewed at a local level by the public. All they see is a 'heat map' for the whole of Victoria (see figure below).



Highest level of detail you can observe deer records on Deer Scan

Feral Scan can also be used to record the numbers of deer controlled via a shooting program. We encourage you (or your shooter) to use this function in Feral Scan to formally record the number of deer shot in any control attempts.

STARTING A SHOOTING PROGRAM

The following information is written for landholders wanting to engage shooters to control deer.

Under Victorian legislation: Any deer, except Hog Deer, that is causing injury or damage to any building, vineyard, orchard, garden or other property, any crop, grass, trees or other vegetation, or any taxon or kind of animal (including fish), may be taken or destroyed by a landowner on his or her property or by the manager, permanent employee or agent of that landowner on that property.

This legislation gives landholders the permission to control deer themselves or by giving permission for someone to do it on their behalf.

Controlling deer.

We use the term “**controlling**” deer, rather than “hunting.” This is because the laws relating to the two methods are very different.

In short, **deer hunting** is conducted on crown land, for example National and State parks and reserves. Deer hunters require a special deer hunting permit and are not allowed to use spotlights or thermal imaging equipment.

For **controlling deer** (which happens on private land), hunters do not require a deer hunting permit but they do need to carry a letter of written permission from the owner of the property they are controlling deer on (see Attachments). They are, however, allowed to use spotlights or thermal imaging equipment. Shooting is the best method we currently have to control deer. Fencing can be used to exclude deer from specific areas but obviously expensive to exclude deer from a whole farm.

**WE ENCOURAGE ALL LANDHOLDERS TO WORK WITH THEIR NEIGHBOURS TO
UNDERTAKE DEER CONTROL OVER A WIDE AS AREA AS POSSIBLE**

Landholder/Shooter Agreement

To assist landholders engage shooters and undertake shooting in a safe and responsible manner we have included an example agreement (ATTACHMENT 1), which addresses the legal requirements, for you to print off and use. We've also included a checklist of additional items for you and your shooter/s to consider and agree on.

Local Shooters

It is ultimately up to the landholder to establish a good relationship with a reliable, safe and responsible shooter/S. To assist in this process we have a list of local shooters, most of who are members of either Sporting Shooters Assoc. Aust. (SSAA) or Australian Deer Assoc. (ADA) and therefore covered with public liability insurance. This is available upon request to South Gippsland Landcare Network (info@sgln.net.au). The SSAA also has a Farmer Assist Program which the link is provided in Further Reading.

It is important to note the distinction between recreational hunting and deer control. Recreational hunters might only want to shoot for meat or antlers, while control is about removing as many animals as possible from a property. You need to talk to your shooter about their ability to take as many deer as possible, on a regular basis, (and other strategies) to reduce their numbers long-term.

Police Notification (Foster Area)

So police can reassure the public if they receive calls from concerned residents and better monitor illegal hunting they would like to be notified of planned shooting. Police need a minimum 24 hours notice or contact Wonthaggi police station if less (or call the Foster police station).

If in the Foster police area include as a condition in your shooter agreement - 'The Shooter must send email to: foster.uni@police.vic.gov.au informing them of their planned shooting, including following details:

- Hunters Name(s)

- Phone Number
- Location of shooting
- Estimated Time of activity

If outside Foster police area please check with your local police station what (if any) notifications they'd prefer.

Mapping properties

As mentioned we encourage landholders to undertake shooting programs across their own boundaries and include their neighbours. To help this process and provide info to your shooter you might want to develop a property boundary map, encapsulating the area the shooter has access to. This can be done with a couple of mapping tools:

1) To Identify the boundaries of a property, type the street address into MapShare:

<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/MapShareVic/>

Instructions for selecting multiple properties are available here (from page 11).

<https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/MapShareVic%20Instructions.pdf>

Unfortunately this tool does let you save the information, but once you know the boundaries you can draw them onto Google Earth using the tutorial below.

2) To draw boundaries and save maps on Google Earth (Google MyMaps is very similar).

<https://vimeo.com/265687728>

Note this tutorial is for landcare projects but shows how to draw and save shapes on a map.

ILLEGAL SHOOTING

Local police would like all cases of illegal shooting reported when they are happening via Triple 0 (000). This does not necessarily mean they can be onsite immediately, but it does mean that instances are permanently reported and followed-up on. Ideally as many details, such as specific location and time should be reported if possible. If it is after the fact (not urgent), illegal shooting or anti-social behaviour can be reported via the Police Assistance Line 131 444.

If you suspect someone is acting illegally, do not approach them, move well away and then report suspected offences. You can also report a crime confidentially via Crime Stoppers at <https://www.crimestoppersvic.com.au>

Signage

To discourage illegal shooting an example of a 'No Shooting' sign available for placing on a fence or gate is shown below. **Please advise if you would like a 60x45 cm version of this sign (Black on Yellow) at info@sgln.net.au**

The 'Rural Watch' sign is intended to make it known that the local community is actively monitoring the local area and will report illegal shooting. This is available for communities who wish to show their active involvement in protecting their properties. Suitable for rural roads, front gates, public land reserves or parks. **Please advise if you would like a 30x40 cm version of either of the signs below (White on Blue) at info@sgln.net.au.**

PRIVATE PROPERTY

NO SHOOTING

**NO CARRIAGE OF
FIREARMS**



Other relevant information will be posted on the SGLN website (www.sgln.net.au) under the South Gippsland Deer Action Group 'Project' page.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES:

- SGLN Website - South Gippsland Deer Action Group 'Project' page.
<https://www.sgln.net.au/2022/02/01/south-gippsland-deer-action-group/>
- Notes from the March 2022 Mt Best Deer Information Night - Includes deer identification and impacts of deer. Can be emailed by request.
- "Control of Deer on Private Property" Fact Sheet, on the Game Management Authority website. [Here](#)
- Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) - Farmer Assist Program
<https://ssaavic.com.au/hunting-pest-control/farmer-assist-program/>
- Australian Deer Association, <https://www.austdeer.com.au/>
- Victorian Deer Control Community Network,
<https://invasives.org.au/our-work/feral-animals/feral-deer/feral-deer-in-victoria/vdccn/>

Attachments

1. Landholder Permission Form & Checklist

(print off for completion)

Permission to access private property to shoot feral deer

The Landholder grants the Shooter permission to access the Property for the purpose of destroying Feral Deer under the Conditions listed below. This signed permission must be carried at all times.

The Agreement is valid for 12 months from the date of signing. The Landholder may revoke the Agreement at any time by notice In Writing to the Shooter.

Landholder: name:
 mobile:
 email:

Shooter: name:
 mobile:
 email:
 firearms license number:
 SSAA or ADA membership number inc' expiry date:

Property: Street address:
 Attach map highlighting boundaries

Feral Deer: Circle relevant species
 Fallow Samba Red Hog*
 **a hunting licence may be required.*

In Writing: [Specify text/email/Whatsapp and give details]
 Landholder:
 Shooter:

Conditions:

1. The Shooter will only access the Property at times agreed In Writing/or verbally with the Landholder.
2. The Shooter will abide by the SSAA or ADA Code of Practice.
3. Permission to access the Property is automatically revoked if the Shooter does not have a valid firearms license or current SSAA or ADA registration.
4. The shooter must record (within 24 hrs of the hunt) the following details of each deer destroyed and upload to the Feral Scan app: numbers shot, breed/s, sex, photo, total hours hunting.
5. The Shooter (please circle):

- a. will remove all parts of the carcass from the Property
 - b. may remove parts of the carcass from the Property
 - c. will dispose of the carcass as follows (*eg bury at location marked on the attached map*):
6. The use of dogs (please circle):
- d. is permitted
 - e. is not permitted
7. The use of spotlights (please circle):
- f. is permitted
 - g. is not permitted
8. Additional conditions (e.g. camping, areas that must be avoided, accompanying people, police and neighbour notifications etc.) See checklist

Signed by: Landholder

Date

Signed by: Shooter

Date :

Additional considerations checklist:

It is also worth discussing these issues as part of your agreement. You may include these as additional conditions to your agreement.

🎬 Ensure you are satisfied with Insurance requirements. Easiest met by the shooter being a current SSAA or ADA member.

🎬 Appropriate carcass management

You may want the carcass removed from site where practically possible or as otherwise agreed with the landowner. Some landowners are moving the carcass to an area they can easily observe (e.g. from home) and use it to attract and shoot foxes when they feed on the carcass.

🎬 Shoot only does (females). Shooting the lead doe is seen as the preferred way to control deer numbers and get the most number of each effort.

🎬 Carry out a joint (landowner/shooter) pre-inspection of the property, hazard and risk identification

🎬 Advise / consult with neighbours and arrange access on neighbouring properties where possible to maximise chance of shooting deer. Ensure who will take responsibility for this.

🎬 Advise local police. Police in some areas have requested to be notified of planned shooting. Ensure who will take responsibility for this. See info pack notes on how to notify police.