



Deer Management Information for Landholders





Deer types



Sambar Stag



Sambar Hind

Sambar are large (110-270kg) and live in family groups



Red Deer Stag



Red Deer Hind

Red Deer are medium size (90-160kg), living in single sex groups



Fallow Deer Buck



Fallow Deer Hind

Fallow are smaller (35-90Kg) usually found in herds

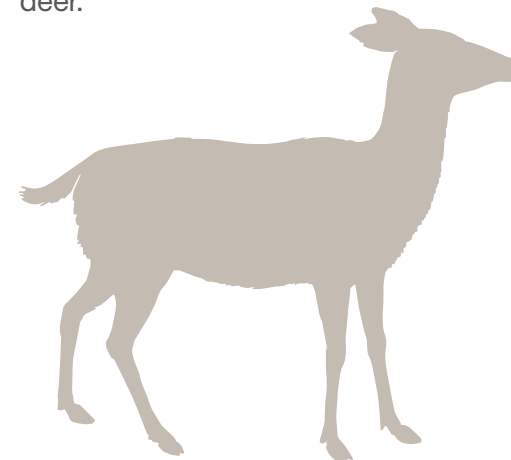
Feral deer in your area

Deer are an introduced species in Australia. Six feral deer species have established wild populations in Australia, with the distribution and abundance of some species increasing in Victoria. The main feral deer species you're likely to encounter in the Yarra Ranges area are Sambar, Fallow and Red deer.

Deer harbour

Deer are found in bushland and open forest where there is access to pasture that provides food, water and shelter, including urban fringe areas with corridors of bush and creek lines. Deer will follow these corridors, adapting to living near people and their animals.

The outer eastern and northern fringes of Melbourne are part of the geographical range of Sambar, Fallow and Red deer.





Deer behaviour

Deer display territorial behaviour, including actively protecting their patch, and have dominance hierarchies in their groups. Larger deer can exhibit aggressive behaviour toward humans and livestock, including horses. Deer have increased in both distribution and density across Victoria, especially since the mid-1990s and occur on both private and public land.

The status of deer

All deer in Victoria are managed under the Wildlife Act 1975 by the Game Management Authority (GMA). The GMA is part of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions; it has responsibility for the management of game animals. Deer are game species on public land and unprotected on private land when they are proven to cause damage.

Deer harvesting on private land is not administered by the GMA, however, if the harvesting contractor is intercepted by a GMA officer or Victoria Police the deer harvester must be able to show written approval from the land owner and a Public Place Permit* if required.

*A Public Place Permit is permission to use a firearm in a populous or built up area. The granting of this permit is determined and administered by Victoria Police.

Damage caused by deer

Deer cause damage to plants, fences and agriculture as well as increasingly coming into contact with people and vehicles on roads. They are large, heavy hooved animals, capable of covering large areas, with indiscriminate eating of vegetation, both native and planted.

Damage by deers includes:

- grazing of ground-storey grasses, forbs and groundcovers which reduces food for native animals, and leads to bare earth and erosion
- browsing of mid-storey shrubs which changes forest structure and cover, and destroys plants that are food sources for important pollinators such as bees, wasps etc.
- destroying fences and trees by rubbing their antlers against them
- destroying home gardens, vegetable patches, large scale crops and vineyards through eating and trampling
- causing erosion and flattening of vegetation from wallowing
- reduction in water quality through to wallowing



Wallow damage caused by deer



Private land deer management actions

Speak with your neighbours to form or join a local deer action group or Landcare group.



Consider deer exclusion fencing.



Yarra Ranges Council, Landcare Group or a Deer Action Group can help you find fencing contractors, professional deer controllers/harvesters and/or game meat processors.



Survey your land for signs of deer and record it - you can use the DeerScan app. Recording these sightings enables Councils to form a clearer picture of where deer are congregating and moving over the change of seasons, including how numbers are changing over time.



Make a private agreement to manage deer impact on your land by using a professional deer harvesting contractor on a regular basis, particularly during times where agricultural activities require protection.



Action cost and effectiveness

Action	Cost	Effectiveness
Accept deer as part of landscape	Low	N/A
Guard individual/groups of plants	Medium to high cost	High: Maintenance required
Property deer exclusion fence	High initial cost	High: With ongoing maintenance
Incorporate electric fence	High	Medium: Unknown long term effectiveness
Recreational or professional hunting to manage deer numbers	Low to high ongoing cost	Medium: Re-invasion can occur Must be ongoing long-term
Harvesting to manage deer numbers (check public place permit requirements)	Ongoing medium to high cost. Investment may be recouped through incentive programs/sale of deer meat.	Medium: Re-invasion can occur Must be ongoing long-term



Management: the difference between hunting and harvesting feral deer

Hunting is a recreational activity that includes the elements of fair chase and the taking of 'trophy deer' and/or removing meat for personal consumption.

A deer harvesting program aims to remove deer that are causing damage and loss on your land. Harvesting is done under controlled circumstance overseen by the land manager.

Options to conduct a harvesting program on your land include:

- using the services of a professional deer harvesting contractor
- joining a community based scheme organised by local landholders/Landcare/Council sponsored environmental management program
- employing the services of a commercial deer harvesting business who sells deer meat

Control options

Fences

Due to their size, it is very difficult to exclude deer, however deer-proof fences of 1.8m high can be constructed, and modified, to allow continued movement of native animals underneath.

Protection of threatened plants (e.g. orchids) is usually undertaken through construction of small (sometimes temporary) fences or cages over individual plants, or fencing out larger areas with deer-proof fencing.

Crops, pasture, orchards and vines can be protected through large deer-proof fences but they are cost-prohibitive for very large areas.

Hunting

Shooting of deer is becoming more common as their numbers increase, however the long-term effectiveness of localised shooting programs is not yet understood. For example, how quickly deer move into an area is unknown.

Shooting deer in open farmland areas is a more viable option and can also be considered in peri-urban areas if professional contractors, who possess appropriate firearms, silencer licences and public place permits, are used.



If you opt to hire a deer harvester ask them to provide a property shooting plan. The plan should describe their process for obtaining permissions (e.g. Public Place Permit where required), safe humane destruction, carcass removal, neighbour notifications, and your written permission for them to harvest the feral deer.



Images: FYXO

Council: Actions on deer concerns in the community

Councils are responding to community requests for help to manage problems arising from increasing numbers of feral deer. This includes property damage, community safety issues and environmental loss on public and private land.

Yarra Ranges Council aims to help landholders better understand deer management issues and create opportunities for improved community-based responses to manage deer.

Council is advocating that State Government and Victoria Police:

- ensure firearms used in the commercial deer harvesting industry are regulated
- develop peri-urban best-practice firearms protocol and standards
- develop a Victorian deer control and firearms competency and accuracy accreditation (with a training organisation i.e. TAFE) for both contractors and volunteer shooters particularly in the peri-urban context.



More Information

Game Management Authority: 136 186

Prime Safe: (03) 9685 7333

Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning,
Deer Management: (03) 9637 9486
(Invasive Species, Biodiversity Division)

Resources

Controlling Deer on Private Property

gma.vic.gov.au/research/deer/deer-on-private-property

Deer meat processing

gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/deer/fact-sheets/deer-meat-processing

Commercial Deer processing

primesafe.vic.gov.au/licensing/meat/game-meat-processing

Deer Recording App

feralscan.org.au/deerscan

Public Place Permit

police.vic.gov.au/public-place-permits

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