



# West Victoria Deer Control Plan 2023–2028 **SUMMARY**





The West Victoria Deer Control Plan 2023–2028 (the Plan) is the Victorian Government’s plan to reduce the impact of deer across the west of Victoria. The aim of the Plan is to have a consistent framework to guide investment and collaborative on-ground actions, for the greatest biodiversity benefit whilst reducing impacts across multiple values and land tenures.

The Plan is one of three region-specific plans developed to address the state’s deer control response under the Victorian Deer Control Strategy (VDCS).

Impacts to a wide range of environmental, economic, and social values have been attributed to wild deer in Victoria. The most significant impacts align to priority values identified within the VDCS, including biodiversity, water quality, public safety, agricultural assets, and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Population modelling indicates that if we do not act, deer will spread further and become more established across western Victoria. The distribution of deer throughout western Victoria is not comprehensively documented, however, Fallow, Red, and Sambar deer are all known to occur, with new Hog deer populations emerging.

Population records indicate deer are not as widely distributed and established across the west as they are in other parts of the state. Opportunities for control include local elimination or containment, and to prevent their further spread into new areas in Victoria’s west, whilst also reducing the impacts of deer where they currently occur.

There is less core deer habitat in west Victoria and more fragmented vegetation compared to east Victoria. Greater areas of agricultural and private land use may assist in slowing deer spread and increase the efficacy of control programs.

The Plan was prepared in consultation with the West Regional Deer Control Partnership Group made up of stakeholders involved in managing or monitoring deer impacts, including land managers, local government, conservation, industry, community groups

and Traditional Owners, with input from the Victorian Deer Advisory Committee.

The Plan encourages agencies and the community to develop local cost-effective deer control options collaboratively, and contribute to monitoring to improve knowledge and success of the program over time.

We anticipate there will be 150,000 ha of deer control in priority locations across Victoria per annum. This Plan will guide these actions whilst contributing towards Biodiversity 2037 targets. The Plan is supported by the Victorian Government commitment of \$19.25m over 4 years and \$4.4m ongoing.

## A biosecurity approach to deer control

In line with Victoria’s Deer Control Framework and biosecurity approach, the objectives of the Plan are:

- Prevention of new deer populations from establishing.
- Local elimination of isolated populations of deer.
- Containment to limit the spread of deer beyond their current range.
- Asset protection to protect and reduce the impacts of deer on priority values.

The Victorian Government’s approach to biosecurity is based on the return-on-investment principle, whereby the greatest return on investment is realised through activities that prevent the entry and establishment of a species.

Prevention is the most cost-effective means of dealing with invasive species where possible, with the benefit–cost ratio decreasing as a species becomes more widespread. In areas where deer have become established, containment and asset protection may be the only practical options.

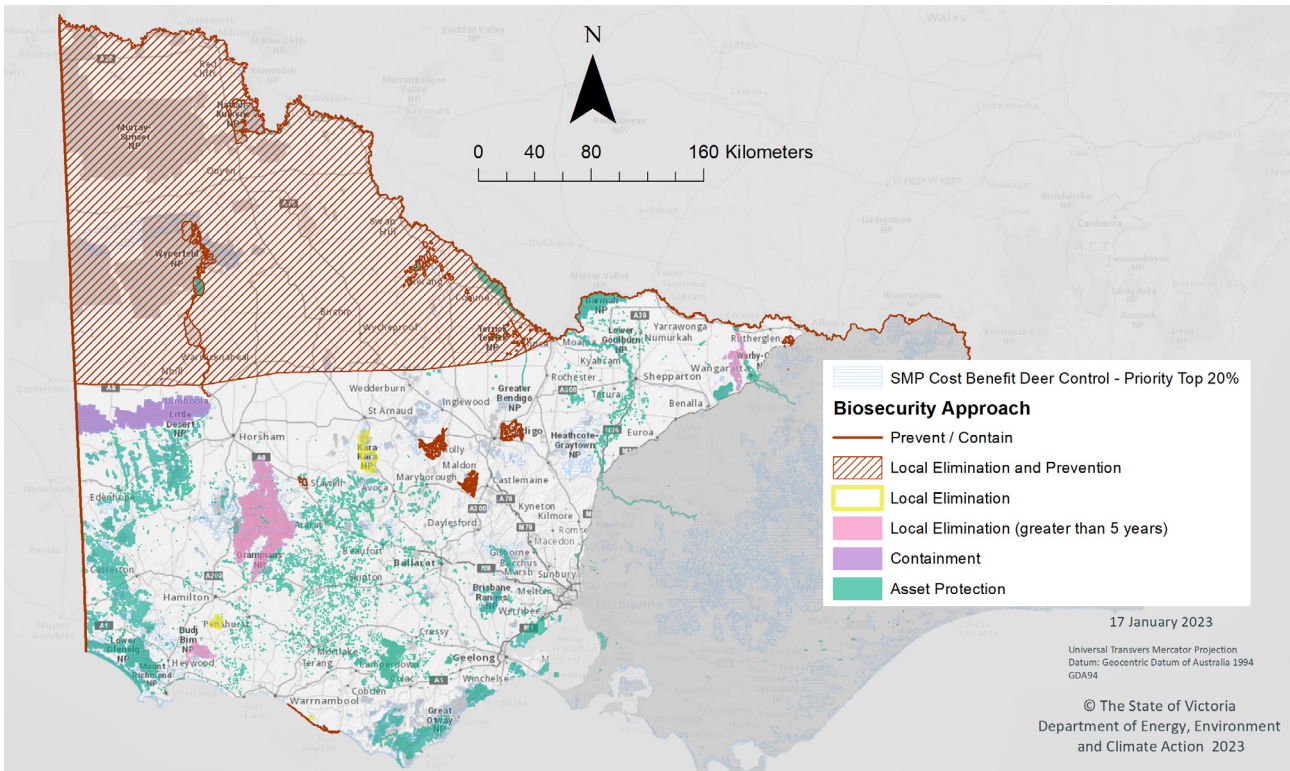


Figure 1. Map of priority values for protection based on biosecurity principles and high cost-benefit areas for deer control (Strategic Management Prospects).

## Identifying priority sites

The Plan identifies priorities for government and community investment in deer control, as shown in Figure 1.

The map shows key biodiversity values at risk from deer identified by the regional partnership group, and priority deer control locations as guided by Strategic Management Prospects (SMP).

SMP helps prioritise investment and biodiversity management actions to achieve the most cost-effective benefits to the most species, in line with Biodiversity 2037 targets.

SMP modelling suggests that over a thousand species of flora and fauna would benefit from deer control efforts across Victoria.

Agriculture and other values impacted by deer were acknowledged to primarily be found within 2-3km of these mapped areas and are to be prioritised accordingly.

DEECA and other land managers can use these maps to identify cost-effective and strategic locations to carry out deer control, surveillance, and other management measures at a local level.

The Plan will guide National Feral Deer Action Plan actions within Victoria, particularly where there is a risk of incursions across the Victorian-South Australian border, and across the Victorian-New South Wales border along the River Murray corridor.

## Improving deer control in the West Victoria

The Plan on a Page provides a snapshot of the goals, actions and expected outcomes to be delivered under the West Victoria Deer Control Plan.

Actions will be rolled out over the life of the Plan (2023–2028) to reduce the impacts of deer in the area.

The Plan will be evaluated against key performance indicators established for each of the actions.

In addition to the five-yearly review, the Plan will be updated as new information becomes available, which will be particularly important during the initial 12 months of the Plan's implementation.



# West Victoria Deer Control Plan 2023–2028 ON A PAGE

**VISION** Deer are no longer significantly impacting on priority environmental, agricultural, and Aboriginal cultural heritage values and public safety in Victoria.  
To be achieved by working together to minimise the impact of deer across the Plan area.

GOALS	1 The impacts of deer on environmental values and cultural values are reduced	2 The impacts of deer on economic values, social values, and public safety are reduced	3 Awareness, understanding and capacity to manage deer is increased
ACTIONS	<p>Undertake control works at priority locations</p> <p>Monitor deer and their impacts at priority locations</p> <p>Stakeholder/community engagement and education at priority locations</p> <p>Partner with Traditional Owners to enable self-determination for the management of Country and protection of values from impacts by deer</p>	<p>Encourage communities, private enterprise, and agricultural industries to undertake deer control or management where there are impacts from deer on natural resources, agricultural enterprises, community assets and community safety</p> <p>Encourage opportunities for collaboration between volunteer or recreational hunters in planning collective local community action to protect economic and social values from the impacts of deer</p> <p>Prioritise deer control within a 2-3km buffer of water supply off-take points managed by water authorities, and within 2km of known deer habitat where impacts from deer are greatest</p>	<p>Improve collation and sharing of data through use of existing online platforms that enable people to record and share their deer sightings, control, or collision data, e.g. VBA, VBA Go, DeerScan, iNaturalist</p> <p>Facilitate sharing of deer related monitoring and research undertaken by Victorian Government agencies, universities, and other entities through annual forums and data share arrangements</p> <p>Increase community understanding of deer impacts and control options, particularly in communities located in or near deer habitat and more broadly</p>

## OUTCOMES



**Protect high value biodiversity**



**Protect agricultural enterprises impacted by deer**



**Protect areas of cultural sensitivity**



**Increase public safety by reducing deer collisions**



**Protect water quality**

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### Cover images

TOP Parks Victoria  
LEFT Department for Environment and Water (SA) Mallee Fowl mounds  
RIGHT HVP Plantations

### Page 2 image

Southern Ark