

Victorian Deer Control Strategy

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Victorian Deer Control Strategy?

The Victorian Deer Control Strategy is a coordinated approach to reducing deer numbers. It is Victoria's plan to reduce the impact of deer on the environment, agriculture, Aboriginal cultural heritage and public safety.

2. Why was the Victorian Deer Control Strategy developed?

The Victorian Government developed the Strategy to address the impact of deer across Victoria. Deer populations have risen quickly and are spreading to new areas. This has a big impact on biodiversity, water quality, public safety, agricultural assets and Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

It helps deliver on *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* and the *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2016–2020*.

3. What will the Victorian Deer Control Strategy do?

The Strategy coordinates and sets priorities to get the best result in the control of wild deer.

The Strategy seeks to:

- reduce the impact of deer on key environmental, agricultural and Aboriginal cultural heritage values and public safety
- make deer control more effective through partnerships and community collaboration
- increase awareness and understanding of deer control, and
- build Victoria's deer control capacity.

4. How is the Victorian Deer Control Strategy different to the draft Deer Management Strategy?

After feedback from the public, the Strategy now provides more focus on reducing the impacts of wild deer.

It earlier proposed deer management zones. Feedback on zoning said this approach was confusing and it was unclear how the zones would work. This was especially so for the proposed Resource Management Zone.

The final Strategy now has a Deer Control Framework that aligns with Victoria's Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework.

5. What does the Deer Control Framework aim to achieve?

The Deer Control Framework will set deer control priorities that offer the best potential return on investment and the best outcomes for biodiversity and other values. Its objectives are to:

- prevent new deer species from becoming established in Victoria
- remove isolated deer populations

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- limit the spread of deer to new areas
- protect high priority environmental, agricultural and Aboriginal cultural heritage values, and
- preserve public safety.

6. What are Regional Deer Control Plans?

Regional Deer Control Plans will set priority locations for deer control or other management measures. This will address the damage deer cause in a defined part of the state.

The Victorian Government will develop these plans with:

- Traditional Owners
- local councils, and
- the community.

7. What are Regional Deer Control Partnership Groups?

Regional Deer Control Partnership Groups will help develop and implement the regional deer control plans.

These will include local stakeholders involved in managing deer impacts, such as:

- land managers
- local governments
- Traditional Owners, and
- conservation, industry and community groups.

DELWP will lead the development of the Regional Plans.

8. Does the Victorian Deer Control Strategy declare deer as a pest?

The Strategy does not propose to declare all deer species as pest animals

Established species of deer (Sambar, Fallow, Red and Hog) will remain classified as game under the *Wildlife Act 1975*.

But that doesn't mean they cannot be controlled if they are causing damage.

This is consistent with the draft Deer Management Strategy

These four deer species are already established in the wild in Victoria

They cannot be eradicated using current control methods

Chital, Rusa, Wapiti and Sika are the deer species not present or established in the wild in Victoria

The Strategy proposes to review their classification and investigate their transition to pest animals under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

The Strategy includes actions to make it easier for public land managers such as Parks Victoria to control deer by removing the need for authorisation to control them under the *Wildlife Act 1975*.

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9. Why is there less focus on recreational hunting?

Feedback on the draft Strategy showed growing community concern about the impacts of deer.

More emphasis on managing these impacts and less on deer as a hunting resource was the most common objective the public wanted.

10. Why has 'Goal 4 Reduce illegal deer hunting' in the draft Deer Management Strategy not been included in the final strategy?

The Game Management Authority and Victoria Police is addressing Issues with illegal hunting.

The Victorian Government will continue promoting legal and responsible hunting.

11. When will deer control under the Strategy begin and is there funding for it?

The Victorian Government announced in the 2020-21 State Budget a \$18.25 million investment over 4 years and \$4.4 million per year ongoing on deer control.

This funding will be used to develop and deliver Regional Deer Control Plans under the Victorian Deer Control Strategy.

This will reduce the impacts of wild deer and create jobs across Victoria for deer controllers and associated roles.

DELWP is leading development of the plans with Regional Deer Partnership Groups.

These groups will comprise local stakeholders involved in managing deer impacts and may include:

- land managers
- local governments
- Traditional Owners, and
- conservation, industry and community groups.

The first Regional Deer Control Plan developed under the Strategy during 2021/22 is the Peri-urban Melbourne Deer Control Plan.

Lessons from the Peri-Urban Deer Control Plan will help develop other regional deer control plans.

An Eastern Victoria Regional Deer Control Plan and a Western Deer Control Plan will be completed in 2022/23.

Delivery of key actions identified in the Peri-Urban Deer Control Plan will commence on-ground in 2022. While development of the East and West plans is underway, further immediate deer control will take place in key locations across Victoria, creating jobs and delivering urgent action on the ground.

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12. How does the Strategy affect deer farmers and pet owners?

Under the Strategy, there will be a review of existing regulations that apply to keeping and farming deer in Victoria.

This will consider how well the risk of deer escaping from farms and establishing in the wild is being managed.

Some deer species that are farmed or kept as pets are not established in the wild in Victoria but are in other states. This includes Sika, Rusa, Chital, Wapiti deer and their hybrids.

The current game classification of these species will be reviewed under the Strategy. This will determine if they are likely to establish populations in the wild and what impact that could have on the environment and other values.

As a result of these reviews, one or more of these species may be declared pest animals under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. It would mean that farming or keeping these animals may require a permit in future or may be prohibited.

We will consult affected groups before any changes are made to deer farming regulations. We will consider impacts on these sectors as part of the review.

13. Who is responsible for controlling/managing the impacts of wild deer?

Wild deer control is a shared responsibility between:

- all levels of government
- Traditional Owners
- conservation and community groups
- the farming sector
- Landcare
- water and catchment management authorities
- the commercial deer industry
- hunting organisations and hunters, and
- community members.

14. Who will implement the Strategy?

The Victorian Government (mainly DELWP) will coordinate the Strategy's rollout. However, partners and community groups are critical to its successful implementation.