

# Victorian Deer Control Strategy

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What is the Victorian Deer Control Strategy?

The Victorian Deer Control Strategy outlines a process for a strategic and coordinated approach to deer control. It is Victoria's plan to reduce the impact growing deer numbers are having on the environment, agriculture, Aboriginal cultural heritage, and public safety.

### 2. Why was the Victorian Deer Control Strategy developed?

The Strategy has been developed by the Victorian Government in response to the rapid increase in wild deer numbers and distribution across the state and the significant impacts deer have on biodiversity, water quality, public safety, agricultural assets and Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

The Strategy 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 provides a coordinated and priority setting framework to guide how 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 the awareness, understanding and capacity to manage deer.

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

In response to feedback on the draft strategy it has changed to provide more focus on reducing the impacts of wild deer on the environment, safety and amenity.

The draft strategy suggested establishing deer management zones. The feedback we received was that the zoning approach was confusing, particularly the 'Resource Management Zone,' and it was unclear how the zones would work. The final Strategy instead outlines a Deer Control Framework, which 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 identify priority areas for deer control that provide the highest potential return on investment and the best outcomes for biodiversity and other values.

The objectives of the framework are to:

- prevent new deer species from becoming established in Victoria,
- remove isolated deer populations,
- limit the spread of deer to new areas, and
- protect high priority environmental, agricultural and Aboriginal cultural heritage values, and public safety.

### 6. What are Regional Deer Control Plans?

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

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The Victorian Government will work with Traditional Owners, local councils and the community to develop these plans.

## 7. What are Regional Deer Control Partnership Groups?

Regional Deer Control Partnership Groups will be set up to guide the development of the regional deer control plans and their implementation. Partnership groups will be comprised of local stakeholders involved and interested in managing deer impacts and may include land managers, local government, Traditional Owners, conservation, industry and community groups.

## 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. Consistent with the draft Deer Management Strategy, 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.

These four species of deer are already established in the wild in Victoria and 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.

## 9. Why is there less focus on recreational hunting?

Feedback on the draft Strategy showed growing community concern about the impact deer are having. More emphasis on managing the impacts deer are having and less on deer as a hunting resource was the most common objective the public wanted to focus on.

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

Issues with illegal hunting are already being addressed through other mechanisms by the Game Management Authority and Victoria Police. The Victorian Government will continue promoting legal and responsible hunting and better hunting compliance.

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

To kickstart the Strategy's rollout, the Victorian Government is investing an initial \$1M to develop and implement the first regional deer control plan under the Strategy— the Peri-urban Melbourne Deer Control Plan.

Public land managers, councils, community groups and Traditional Owners will be involved in the plan's development.

Learnings from this project will help develop other regional deer control plans across Victoria.

The Victorian Government is already undertaking a deer and pest control operation in bush-fire affected areas to give native plants and animals the best chance of survival following the bushfires.

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Also, 10 projects involving deer control received \$2.04 million through the Victorian Government's Biodiversity Response Planning fund.

Parks Victoria also undertakes deer control in some national parks.

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

An action under the Strategy is to review existing regulations that apply to the keeping and farming of deer in Victoria. The review will consider whether the risks of deer escaping farms and establishing wild populations are being effectively managed.

Some of the deer species currently being farmed or kept as pets in Victoria are not established in the wild in Victoria but are in other states. This includes Sika, Rusa, Chital, Wapiti deer and their hybrids. As part of the Strategy, the current 'game' classification of these species will be reviewed to determine whether they are likely to establish populations in the wild and what impact that could have on the environment. 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 the farming or keeping of these animals may require a permit in future or be prohibited.

Consultation will occur with affected groups, as required, before any proposed changes to the regulation of farmed deer occurs. Impacts on these sectors will be considered 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
- community members.

## 14. Who is responsible for implementing the Strategy?

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