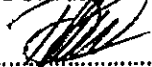


Wild Fallow Deer in Tasmania

I Daniel Richard Bowden of 16 Franklin Court Shearwater am hereby providing my personal opinion as an interested individual and recreational deer stalker in the management of wild Fallow Deer in the state of Tasmania.

Signed..... ..... On this the 26th day of JUNE 2016

Environmental impacts on public and private land

Without proper research into both the browsing and grazing diet of fallow deer specifically in Tasmania I don't believe that there is enough information to say exactly what level of impact there is to the environment caused by fallow deer. It could be assumed that there would be a crossover of similar food sourced by native browsing macropods, arboreal mammals and deer. It would therefore be difficult to differentiate the damage caused by deer and damage caused by native wildlife. Being a hard hoofed animal it is also difficult to say what effect they have on soil erosion when domesticated hard hoofed sheep, cattle and horses have been present in the state for a similar time. There appears to be no conclusive evidence that fallow deer cause damage to the environment any more than other domestic stock residing in the same environment. It would be logical to conclude that fallow deer do in fact have an environmental impact but to quantify that with little information would be purely anecdotal, especially where many land uses have been modified for agricultural development. It is safe to say however that fallow deer do not have a neutral or positive environmental impact in Tasmania. In saying that there are also many other introduced fauna that have a more definitive environmental impact in Tasmania, two examples being feral cats and rabbits.

Impact on commercial activities on private land

The impact of fallow deer on commercial activities on private land is relative to the localised deer population density and the specific land use. Certainly where crops and improved pasture exists that deer find favourable these will invariably be grazed by fallow deer. Again, without specific research into the impact of fallow deer on commercial operations there is little that can be commented upon and economic losses could merely be estimated. Certainly culling of deer, thus reducing deer numbers reduces economic losses to agriculture. Fallow stags and spikers are well known to strip velvet from their antlers by rubbing young plantation and regeneration trees managed for timber plantation production. At the same time, it is also well documented that native herbivores browse on plantation and forestry regeneration also. Deer are also known to cause damage to fences.

The partly protected status of fallow deer under the Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010

Like a number of introduced trout species, fallow deer are an introduced species to the state of Tasmania that are partly protected under current legislation. They remain a sustainable resource that was deliberately released in Tasmania in 1836 for the purpose of hunting and are owned by the people. Deer stalking as an outdoor recreational pursuit is firmly entrenched in Tasmanian rural and bush life. There are economic returns to both the state and small businesses from both deer hunting licence sales as well as ancillary expenses associated with the pursuit E.g .fuel, ammunition, rifles, camping equipment etc. The Tasmanian male fallow deer are hunted for their attractive antlered trophies by local and interstate hunters. Deer hunting generally is an outdoor sport that has a firm following in many states within Australia and countries across the world. Since 1994 much work has been done to manage the Tasmanian Fallow deer herd to increase the male deer antler size and thus the trophy potential of male fallow deer.

Fallow deer provide a wild meat source at a time where domestically farmed red meat like lamb and beef has increased in cost in recent years. Wild Tasmanian venison provides a lean and relatively cheap red meat alternative to commercial options for the price of a deer licence, a suitable hunting location and the ability of the stalker to experience success.

I am of the opinion that the partly protected status of fallow deer be continued into the future within the traditional core deer range. It would be very difficult to reduce large numbers of deer in the state or even eradicate deer unless every land owner/manager in the state was to change their deer management practices and take a state wide approach to the reduction of deer numbers. Certainly any animal that experiences increased hunting pressure will exert an increase in wariness and total eradication would be definitely unachievable. If deer were deregulated, thus there being no requirement to purchase a licence, the state would lose revenue related to licence sales in excess of 300,000 dollars per year. Whilst deer are regulated by legislation they are also regulated at a local level by the desires of land owner /managers. Land owners can dictate the number of hunters they allow on their properties and what animals they want harvested and the numbers they wish controlled within the current regulations. These 'on farm' regulations vary from property to property and with any deregulation may not achieve a reduction of deer in Tasmania with localised property rules may still be adhered to thus overruling legislative changes . Hunters may still continue to manage deer locally and potentially showing restraint on harvesting animals to increase trophy potential. What needs to be defined is an agreed wild deer traditional core range. Deer within this range should be managed by the current legislation and retain a partly protected status.

Commercial opportunities for the use of wild populations

I am of the opinion that deer should be managed for all people not for the financial gain of a few. Fallow deer have been successfully farmed in the past and this can continue into the future. But allowing commercial opportunities for wild deer is not warranted for a publically owned resource.

Any matters incidental thereto.

Feral deer farm escapees, new deer herd establishments and deer in the TWAA

In recent years there has been an extension of the fallow deer range due to probable reasons of natural population dispersion, unauthorised liberations and deer farm escapees. Deer herds outside of the traditional core range including deer encroachments into the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWAA) should be managed differently to those herds within the traditional core range. In these areas deer should be unregulated and there should be no bag limit, immature antlered male deer (spikies) may be taken and antlerless deer able to be taken from May to October during times where fawns are not dependant on their mothers. Licences should still be imposed to hunt these deer but as mentioned no limit on the number of deer taken. Proof of permission provided by land manager/holders should be carried by all hunters and produced on demand to authorised officers as to the location of where the deer were taken but tags would not need to be applied to animals taken. The only issue with this scenario is that some private property landholders outside the core traditional range could be sympathetic towards deer and provide safe havens for them. Given that deer provide no positive input into the Tasmanian environment and they live outside the core range there should not be any herd management.

Antlerless deer season extension

I feel that the continuation of the ordinary deer season continue as it currently stands. However I believe there would be hunter benefits to the extension of the second doe season from mid-May to October each year. This will effectively allow for antlerless deer hunting period of nearly six months of the year. The benefit of the extension of the season will allow greater time for hunters to harvest antlerless deer compared to the 6 week period that currently exists. Because a large proportion of deer stalking occurs on private property individual landholders/land managers can still dictate the length of the antlerless deer season they desire on a 'property by property' basis for hunters to harvest antlerless deer, be that the current 6 weeks or up to the 6 months of the year if in fact the season were to be extended.

Bow hunting of Fallow deer

Hunting of deer using compound bows is a practise conducted both in mainland Australia and around the world. Opportunities should be explored for the use of bow and arrow hunting with appropriate regulations pertaining to minimum bow poundage and broad head arrows specifications for hunting deer. Potentially extending the male deer season for additional 2 weeks for a specific season for bow hunting should be explored with consultation with stakeholders.

Fallow deer a public resource residing on private property

With an increase of deerstalkers and an estimated increase in deer numbers there appears that there is less available private property on which to hunt. Private properties within the core Fallow deer range should be assessed to determine their approximate deer numbers coupled with size of their properties to determine a safe hunter carrying capacity. Private land owners should be encouraged to allow the maximum amount of deer hunters that the capacity of their property can safely sustain. With the current 3 tag allocation as at 2016 deer season allowing more licenced paying hunters could reduce the reliance on crop protection tags. These tags are provided to landholders that can demonstrate economic losses but there is no need for hunters using crop protection tags to purchase or licence. This essentially means that these tags are subsidised by paying deer licence holders during the ordinary season. There appears to be some inequity in relation to deer hunters not having access to quality deer property on which to hunt and therefore have difficulty filling tags and other hunters having access to good properties with high deer numbers and good ability to fill tags. These same properties often have capacity to obtain crop protection tags for culling of deer, yet other hunters are forced to hunt in limited timeslots on balloted forested public land with lower deer numbers. It is estimated that over 40% of hunters are not filling their allowable tags during the ordinary 2015 season (Source: Game tracks 2016) and therefore it would be beneficial to allow more hunters improved access to deer as opposed a privileged minority of hunters crop protection tags. It would be beneficial for all law abiding hunters to have access to Tasmanian deer herd where equality existed and more opportunities for all hunters. Whilst this seems idealistic I understand that landholders have every right to allow or deny any number of prospective deerstalkers and in at least large property landholders with few hunters and a large deer population should be encouraged to allow additional hunters onto their land where deer control is warranted as opposed to few hunters and high numbers of crop protection tags. Investigations into the potential of opening access for deerstalking in deer occupied conservation areas, Regional Reserves and areas of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area should be explored. Opportunities on private property and public land should be developed where possible for both new and young deer stalkers for the long term future of deer hunting in Tasmania. This will ensure that landholders and land managers have access to the resources to respond to the sustainable management of deer in the state into the future.

Allison Waddington

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